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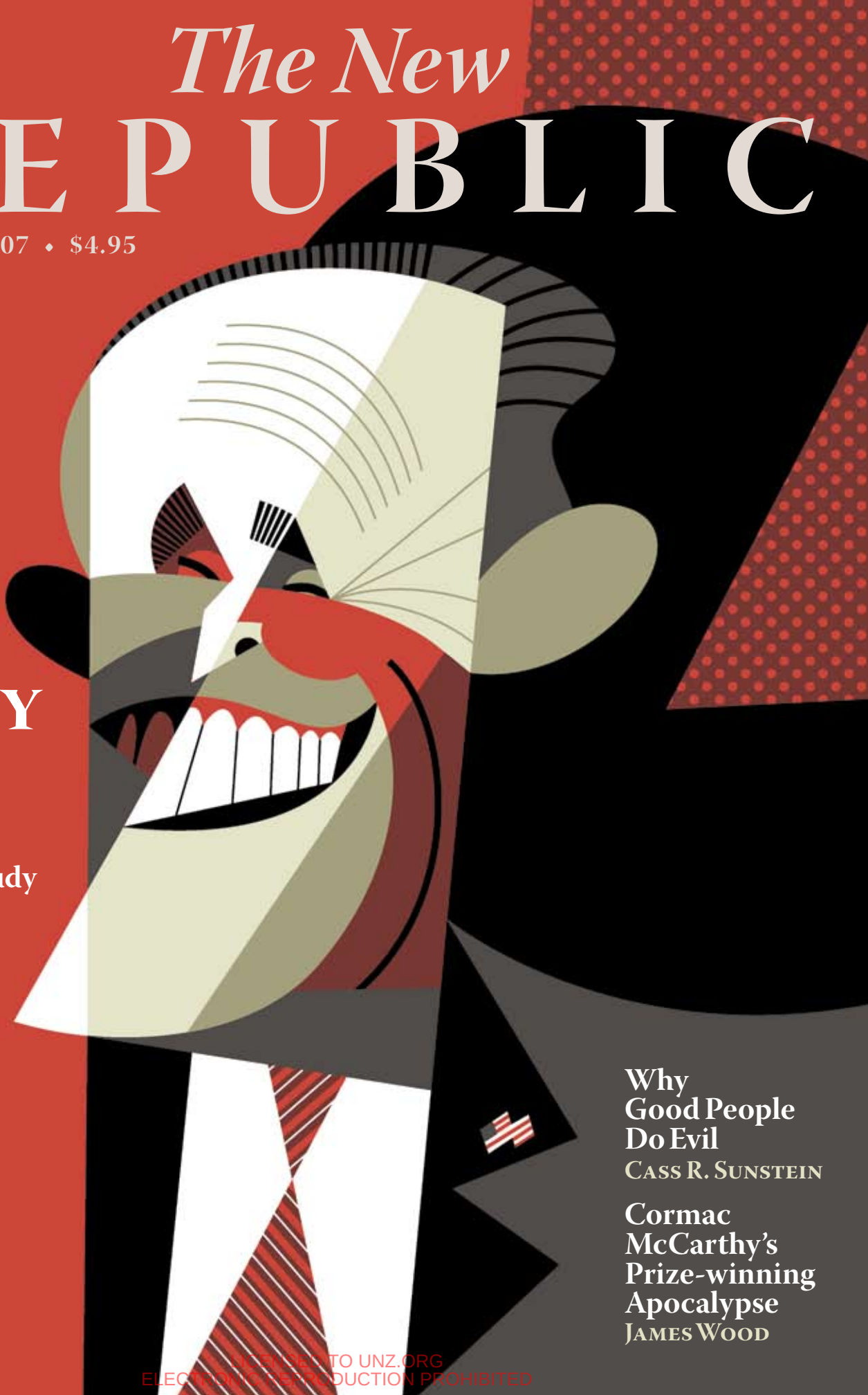

PARTY BOY

Why the GOP's future belongs to Rudy

THOMAS B. EDSALL

Why Good People Do Evil

CASS R. SUNSTEIN

Cormac McCarthy's Prize-winning Apocalypse

JAMES WOOD

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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When Moguls Attack!

EARLIER THIS MONTH, Rupert Murdoch—the benefactor of "When Animals Attack!," "American Idol," Page Three Girls, "The O'Reilly Factor," and other vital cultural institutions—announced his intention to purchase a crown jewel of U.S. journalism, *The Wall Street Journal*. The prospect of the Aussie vulgarian lording over the paper has whipped up an end-of-days gloom across the nation's newsrooms.

But, of course, most of these newsrooms were already in an apocalyptic mood—and with good reason. Circulation has been dropping for decades. Shareholders feel cheated by the returns on their investment, and their discontent has escalated into open rebellion, with portfolio managers loudly complaining that the great newspaper-owning families (the Sulzbergers, the Grahams, and the Bancrofts) have undemocratically hoarded control of their companies (see Roger Lowenstein's "Paper Tigers" on page 20). And that's to say nothing of the two-front political war that the so-called "mainstream media" (a.k.a. the MSM) must fight, with both the left and right lambasting its claims to objectivity, the very source of editorial authority.

By swallowing the *Journal*, Murdoch may or may not deepen this crisis. There's some evidence to suggest that he will refrain from inserting barely clad women next to the paper's stock tables—and some reason to believe that he doesn't intend to fully sync the *Journal* with Fox News and *The Weekly Standard*, his ideological organs. Nevertheless, this should be a pivotal moment for liberals—a time to dial back their relentless hostility to newspapers and start crusading for them.

We don't mean to sound naïve about the shortcomings of these institutions—which do deserve to be spanked quite frequently for their timidity, laziness, and reluctance to challenge power. But you need only consider the contributions of the *Journal* to understand the stakes of the present moment. Over the past decades, the *Journal* hasn't just been the great chronicler of capitalism; it has been one of the most important checks against its excesses. The paper has regularly exposed important failings of the market—from the leveraged buyouts and insider trading of the 1980s to the stock manipulation of recent years. In the era of deregulation, it's hard to imagine that the government would have uncovered these epic cases of malfeasance.

Sadly, these great feats haven't won the newspaper business liberal love. There are many, especially in the blogosphere, who can't wait to dance on the graves of the crusty old MSM "gatekeepers." They champion the rise of "citizen journalism," as techno-enthusiasts like to describe the bloggers and their Wikipedia model of media: Unlike the MSM brontosaurs, bloggers will actually report the truth without fear of losing access to Washington cocktail parties or pressure from corporate bosses. And the champions of the blogosphere have a point. There have been times in the Bush era when blogs have crushed the largest papers in pursuit of scoops.

But there's a problem with the new order they imagine—which resembles the partisan newspapers of the nineteenth century, with bloggers chasing Truth without the shackles of objectivity. You can always dismiss a blogger, or a partisan paper like the *New York Post*, as biased. But *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* have long batted down this complaint. That's because it rings so empty. The MSM makes an earnest (albeit occasionally flawed) effort to achieve a neutral understanding of events, and that's the source of an authority and prestige that even its harshest critics in the political and corporate elite still must respect.

Indeed, that's what makes this moment so dangerous. While the MSM's authority and prestige persist, they are in peril. And it's not just outside forces that have conspired against them. Newspapers themselves have squandered the sense of self-confidence that they once oozed. Talk to editors and publishers and they will confess that they have no compelling plan for reinvigorating themselves. The buccaneering spirit of Ben Bradlee and A.M. Rosenthal has given way to the timidity that characterized prewar WMD reporting and led the *Times* to sit on its domestic wiretapping stories for a year. John Carroll, the former editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, has lamented "shrinking the social purpose of newspapers."

How can newspapers recover their mojo? For starters, they should stop sounding apocalyptic. Their business is in much less of a crisis than you might imagine. The long-term decline in newspaper readership can be largely attributed to

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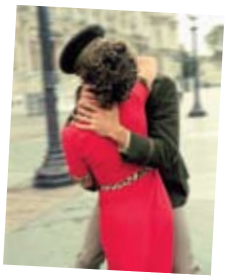
the death of the evening paper. The circulation of morning papers has actually risen by about 60 percent since 1980. And, for papers like *The Washington Post* that have shed print readers, Web traffic has grown at an astonishing pace. And profit margins at most papers remain high. As *The New Yorker*'s James Surowiecki pointed out last year, the McClatchy newspaper conglomerate, which purchased Knight Ridder last year, has healthier profit margins than, say, ExxonMobil.

The crisis in newspapers relates more to perceptions than the actual bottom line. While the *Times*, the *Post*, and the *Journal* are still run by their founding families, they are traded on the New York Stock Exchange. They may generate good profit—although Dow Jones & Company less so—but Wall Street has branded their industry stagnant, a kiss of death with investors. So, even though they are profitable, they must answer to investors who continue to demand cost-cutting that boosts share prices but undermines their mission.

As stewards of their papers, the Sulzbergers, the Grahams, and the Bancrofts have exuded the best spirit of Progressive-era elites, a commitment to reform and independence. But, with Wall Street imperiling their legacy, it's time for the families to begin considering a different path. If the stock market won't properly value their companies, then they should find investors who will help them take their companies private—and keep them out of Rupert Murdoch's long grasp.

Stale Baguette

We at *The New Republic* love Paris in the springtime, and never more so than when that springtime happens to fall during the French presidential elections. Over the last few months, we've joined the rest of the United States in casting an interested eye to the Gallic nation and its democratic exertions. And, along with the usual supply of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité*, France's most exciting political season in years has marked the return of something uniquely American: the French cliché. Yes, the U.S. media's affection for the stalest of French stereotypes is rather like France's love of Jerry Lewis—legendary and without limit. "Listen to the conversation with the waiter at the table next to you in a Parisian restaurant at lunchtime and more often than not it will involve a nuanced discussion of what is best to eat and just which wine to drink," *The New York Times* rhapsodized. (In summing up the country's political mood, the paper also couldn't resist noting the quaint charm of the "neighborhood bistros and bakers and cheese shops and charcuteries.") On MSNBC, we learned that some French voters "even bicycled to the polls, carrying baguettes." And the *Toledo Blade* had this to say of the tense match between conservative Nicolas Sarkozy and his socialist rival, Ségolène Royal: "*Sacré bleu*!"



JAMES RUSSELL/CORBIS

But the beret-wearing, Gauloise-smoking, wine-sipping, cheese-eating, bicycle-pedaling Frenchman of yore has vanished—except, perhaps, from America's news sources. France is now famously—and, at times, fractiously—multiethnic and religiously diverse. Nearly 80 percent of its population is urban-dwelling. (Cycling may be all well and good for bucolic country lanes, but most Parisians ride *le métro*.) Meanwhile, the country's sacred café culture suffers as Starbucks forces the corner *tabac* out of business. And—*hélas*!—you can forget about that cigarette with your coffee: France recently banned smoking in public places.

But, while the *vrai* France has less and less in common with its time-frozen American depiction, it has come to increasingly resemble America itself: a world-class economy troubled by joblessness and immigration, a secular national culture challenged by rising religiosity, an uncertain standing in the international community. The French themselves seem to be indirectly acknowledging these similarities with the election of Sarkozy, a politician who has been nicknamed "*l'Américain*" and whom the French media has often decried as that most odious of American stereotypes: "*un cowboy*."

So perhaps it's time to retire those hackneyed images of rude waiters, brooding intellectuals, and a Bordeaux-swilling citizenry. "The French people," Sarkozy noted in his victory speech, "have chosen to break with the ideas, the habits, and the actions of the past." Let us, too, break with our old clichés of the French. *Vive la différence*! ◆

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ART/DESIGN DIRECTION *Heroun+Co./Christine Car*
CONTRIBUTING PHOTO RESEARCH *Jane Yeomans*
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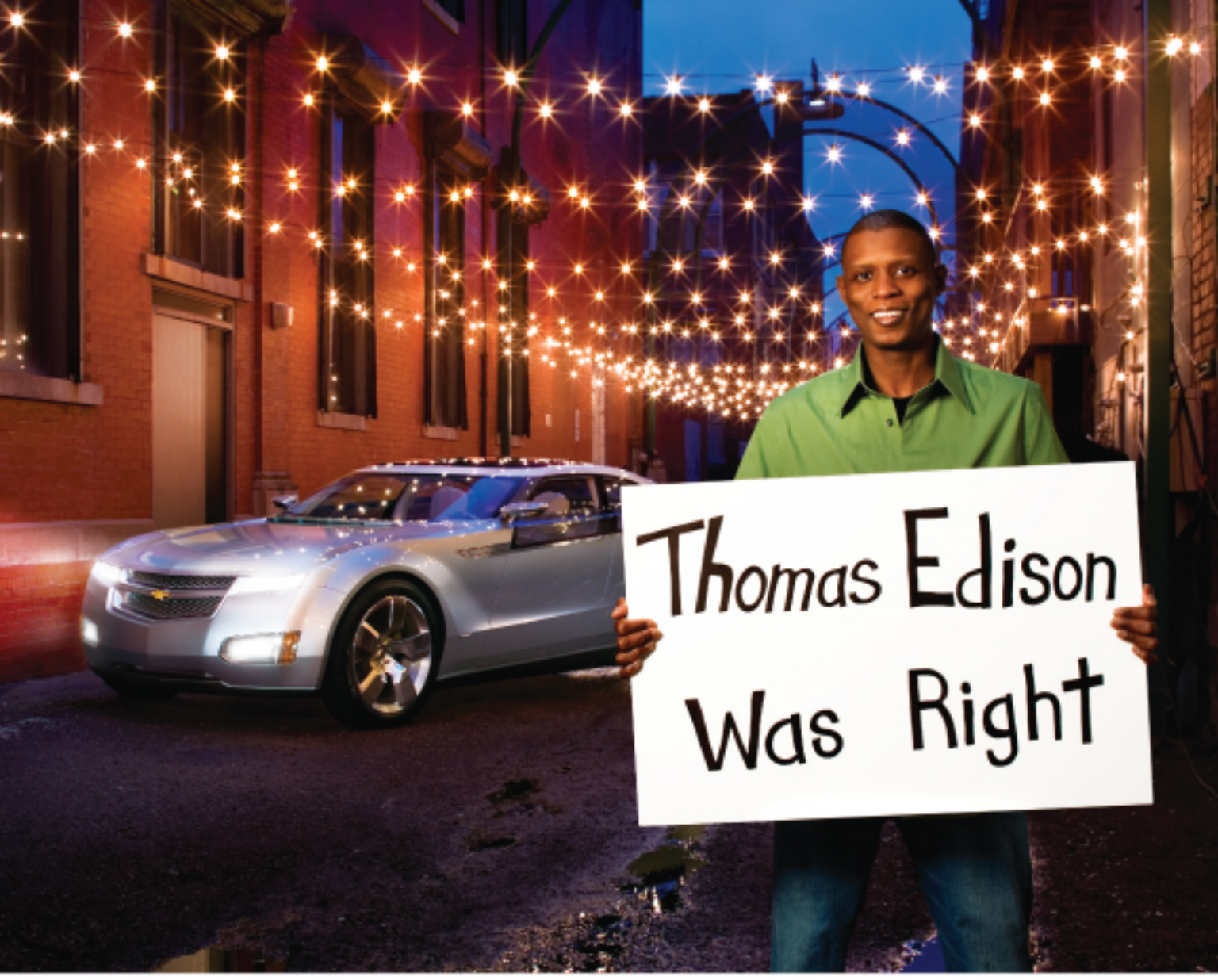

Imagine a car that plugs into an electric socket. One that uses zero gasoline and produces zero emissions. Thomas Edison imagined it, or something like it, over 100 hundred years ago. Today, I'm helping to bring it to life in GM's landmark Chevy Volt — a four passenger concept vehicle powered by GM's E-Flex propulsion system. It delivers 40 miles of pure electric driving, then a fuel efficient engine seamlessly powers up, re-charging the battery, and giving the Volt a total range of 600 miles with just a little fuel added.

It's just one part of GM's commitment to energy diversity — creating vehicles that use fuels from diverse sources, reducing our dependence on petroleum and lowering emissions. I'm part of the team in Detroit that's working on a transformation in vehicles today.

Jelani Aliyu

Jelani Aliyu

Lead Exterior Designer, Chevrolet Volt

GM

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Pay Check

Letting stockholders set CEO pay and other communist plots.

JONATHAN CHAIT

A FEW MONTHS ago, when Democrats proposed letting workers form unions without elections, Republicans recoiled in horror, issuing ringing paeans to workplace democracy. "After two hundred–plus years of our American democracy, it is breathtaking to see the right to a secret ballot rejected so flatly and so strongly," said Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, in a typical example of the Jeffersonian rhetoric then coursing through Washington.

Today, Democrats are proposing to let a company's shareholders hold an advisory vote on how much they pay their CEO. Sounds democratic, right? Alas, much as it has in the Middle East, the GOP has grown weary of democratization. "This is Congress beginning to intrude on corporations," warned Representative Spencer Bachus. Keep in mind that the bill does not set limits on CEO pay. It does not even give stockholders the right to directly set compensation for their CEO. (Heaven forbid. That would be socialism. Or, well, free-market capitalism.) The bill merely gives shareholders the right to hold a *nonbinding* vote on whether the CEO—who, after all, works for them—is getting paid too much. But President Bush has promised to veto even this meager step.

The reason for the bill is that there's an abundance of evidence that CEOs get paid too much. Not too much in the "why do teachers earn 35,000 dollars a year while CEOs earn five hundred times as much" sense, but too much in the sense that their compensation doesn't reflect their actual economic value. In 1976, the average CEO compensation was 36 times that of the average worker, and it was 369 times the worker average in 2005. The rise in CEO pay vastly exceeds the rise in value of the companies they run.

To free-market purists, it's axiomatic that, if CEOs are taking home an ever-larger share of corporate income, they must be producing that much more value for their firms. "Clearly the top-performing CEOs in corporate America earn every penny of their compensation and then some," wrote Dick Armey in an op-ed that ran in *The Washington Times* on March 9 (and then—evidently due to a strong demand for CEO apologists—again on March 11).

But there's an alternate theory explaining the explosive rise in CEO pay. It holds that the boards of directors, which set CEO pay, don't perfectly represent shareholder interests. Board members are sometimes appointed by CEOs or are CEOs themselves. Their incentive to please the CEO by keeping his compensation high is greater than their incentive to please shareholders by keeping it low. Indeed, being too tough on a CEO could jeopardize their chances of getting future appointments.

Above all, board members are social beings, not perfectly rational maximizers of investor utility. They often belong to multiple boards and don't expend much time bargaining down CEO pay on behalf of shareholders. They identify with the CEO and will go along with overly generous pay unless it's so huge it provokes outrage. Their standard method is to set pay by looking at the industry average and going a little higher. (Everyone wants to think *their* executive is above-average.) The result is a cycle of ever-rising CEO pay.

Harvard's Lucian Bebchuk and Berkeley's Jesse Fried have found lots of evidence supporting this theory. The two have looked at all the factors one would associate with a weak board of directors—the CEO is a director of the board, or a member, or the members serve on several boards—and all of them correlate with higher CEO pay. The discovery that executive compensation is dependent not just on supply and demand but on the independence of the board of directors helps explain lots of facts that the pure free-market model can't—unnecessarily complicated pay schemes, bonuses to fired executives who were owed nothing, et cetera.

This theory is the basis for the House bill giving shareholders the right to a vote on executive pay. A nonbinding vote would give shareholders a chance to express dissatisfaction with exorbitant pay and shame compensation boards into doing their jobs. Great Britain and Australia have this arrangement, and it has curtailed the worst abuses.

Republicans, though, warn that letting shareholders hold even a symbolic vote would have all sorts of dangerous effects. "The regulation, criticism, and hounding of public-company CEOs may have a major cost," fretted Steven Kaplan, a University of Chicago professor, testifying at a hearing two months ago. "CEOs can and will leave public companies to do something else."

The poor dears. The average CEO of a Standard & Poor 500 company earns nearly $15 million a year. I thought this would make it worthwhile to suffer perhaps some very occasional criticism from the people who pay their salaries. But apparently beneath the image of the hard-charging chief executive lie some very delicate flowers.

Fellow Republican Mike Castle of Delaware, whose management-friendly bylaws have lured more than half of all public companies to incorporate there, worries that "activist institutional investors, who may have their own political and social agendas" would get "more influence." And GOP Representative Randy Neugebauer warns that "this impulsive legislation can only distract shareholders from their true power—which is the power to pull their investment from any company that acts recklessly in deciding executive compensation." In sum, investors are hippie freaks and as distractible as small children.

The funny thing is, conservatives usually glorify investors—or, in their creepy Marxist phrase, "the investor class." It's not unusual for them to straightforwardly pledge to advance the interests of this favored class. "Bush recognizes that the investor class is the most important demographic group in the country," Grover Norquist said in 2003, celebrating tax cuts for stockholders. Just last week, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial warning against a potential tax hike on capital was titled "AN ASSAULT ON THE INVESTOR CLASS."

But these shows of comradeship are reserved for those instances when investors' interests clash with non-investors—i.e., the poor schlubs who don't own any stocks. When the heroic investor class bumps up against the even more heroic (which is to say, vastly wealthier) CEO class, the dialectic suddenly changes. Doesn't class solidarity count for anything these days? ◆

TRB
From Washington

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An Urgent Call by Scientists to: DEFEND SCIENCE!

In the U.S. today science, as science, is under attack as never before.

THE SIGNS of this are everywhere. The attacks are coming at an accelerating pace, and include frequent interventions by powerful forces, in and out of the Bush Administration, who seem all too willing to deny scientific truths, disrupt scientific investigations, block scientific progress, undermine scientific education, and sacrifice the very integrity of the scientific process itself — all in the pursuit of implementing their particular political agenda.

AND TODAY this dominant political agenda is profoundly allied and intertwined with an extremist (and extremely anti-science) ideological agenda put forward by powerful fundamentalist religious forces commonly known as the Religious Right. These fundamentalists now have extensive influence and representatives in major institutions of the U.S. government, including Congress and the White House. This itself goes a long way towards explaining why science itself is under such unprecedented attack.

IT IS COMMONPLACE under the current administration for the government to deny funding, censor scientific reports, or in other ways undermine scientific research which might turn up facts they don't want to hear; to manipulate, distort, or outright suppress scientific findings they find objectionable; to attempt to reshape government scientific panels to obtain policy recommendations on issues ranging from health to the environment, based less on actual scientific findings than on the requirements of the administration's agenda.

THE SITUATION is so serious that more than 6,000 scientists have already signed the "Restoring Scientific Integrity" statement of the Union of Concerned Scientists, which denounces the Bush Administration for "abuse of science"; and *Scientific American* published an editorial under the title: "Bush-League Lysenkoism: The White House Seeks to Bend Science To Its Will."

GENUINE SCIENCE never proceeds from, or uses as its starting point, any set of subjective "beliefs," "opinions" or "faith-based edicts" handed down by religious or secular authorities and proclaimed to be beyond human questioning, testing and investigation. To bring into the scientific process assumptions, religious or otherwise, which were not arrived at by scientific methods, and which by definition cannot be tested by scientific methods, would destroy science as science.

IN CONCLUSION: We must refuse to accept a situation where scientific inquiry is blocked or its findings ruled out of order unless they conform to the goals of the government, to corporate interests and to the ideology of religious fundamentalists; where dogma enforced by governmental and religious authority takes the place of science; where the scientific approach of seeking natural explanations for natural phenomena is suppressed.

WE MUST INSIST on an atmosphere where scientists are allowed to seek the truth, even when the truth conflicts with the views and policies of those in power, and where the scientific spirit is fostered; where science education and the popularization of the scientific method are valued; where people are encouraged to pursue an understanding of how and why things are the way they are; where all that has been learned by humanity so far, all that has repeatedly been tested and found to be true, serves as the starting point for further investigation of reality.

IT IS UP TO US. IT IS TIME TO TAKE A CLEAR AND DECISIVE STAND IN DEFENSE OF SCIENCE. THIS IS OF CRUCIAL AND URGENT IMPORTANCE NOT ONLY FOR SCIENTISTS, BUT FOR PEOPLE THROUGHOUT SOCIETY, FOR HUMANITY AS A WHOLE AND FOR OUR FUTURE.

Over 1,600 signatories, including 13 Nobel laureates and over 80 members of the National Academy of Sciences, have signed the complete Defend Science Statement to date.

To take up the challenge to defend science, to read and sign the entire Defend Science Statement and see the complete list of signatories, and to support our efforts for further publication of the Statement to reach the public broadly, please go to: **http://www.defendscience.org**.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Under Surveillance

Sam Tanenhaus wrote a biography of Whittaker Chambers some years back, so presumably he knows a thing or two about treason. But, in his article about William F. Buckley Jr. and the conservative movement, he states that "*Commentary* has seriously proposed that the editors of *The New York Times* committed treason by publishing reports on the Bush administration's domestic surveillance program" ("Athwart History," March 14).

As the author of the *Commentary* article in question, I would like to set Tanenhaus straight. First, I have never suggested that editors of the *Times* committed treason or anything of the sort. I did argue that the *Times* clearly violated a provision of the law known as Section 798 of Title 18 that flatly forbids the publication of classified information in the highly sensitive area of communications intelligence. The *Times*' position seems to be that the law is unconstitutional. But, in our democratic system, Congress passes laws and the courts determine whether they are unconstitutional. Journalists, even powerful ones like the editors of the *Times*, are not free to pick and choose the statutes they wish to observe and then claim immunity from prosecution for violating the others.

Second, Tanenhaus refers to the NSA "domestic surveillance program." A warrantless "domestic surveillance program" would unequivocally be an unlawful governmental action. But, of course, the secret counterterrorism program that the *Times* compromised with its front-page story of December 16, 2005, was intercepting *international* communications, in which one party was a suspected Al Qaeda operative either in the United States or abroad. The legality of the NSA program is a contested matter now before the courts; a good argument can be had about its status, but to confuse an international surveillance program with a domestic one is to be as imprecise and inflammatory as to use the word "treason" in describing a much less serious violation of the law.

Gabriel Schoenfeld
Senior Editor, Commentary

Sam Tanenhaus responds:
Gabriel Schoenfeld is right about one thing, at least. I did write a book that dealt with treason, specifically that of Alger Hiss, who, though convicted of perjury, was in fact guilty of transmitting classified intelligence to the Soviet Union—an act that belongs to the same category of crime that Schoenfeld discussed in his article "Has the 'New York Times' Violated the Espionage Act?" (*Commentary*, March 2006). In that article, Schoenfeld concluded that "[w]hat the *New York Times* has done is nothing less than to compromise the centerpiece of our defensive efforts in the war on terrorism." He added: "The laws governing what the *Times* has done are perfectly clear; will they be enforced?" But what truly exercised Schoenfeld in 2006 was that the *Times*—in his eccentric formulation—had "embrac[ed] a quasi-isolationist stance." Worse, "[i]f it has not inveighed directly against the war on terrorism, its editorial page has opposed almost every measure taken by the Bush administration in waging that war, from the Patriot Act to military tribunals for terrorist suspects to the CIA renditions of al-Qaeda operatives to the efforts to depose Saddam Hussein." In retrospect, not a bad record of opposition. Schoenfeld now insists he "never suggested that editors of the *Times* committed treason or anything of the sort." This is nonsense. The charge of espionage implies a corollary charge of treason. The mode of clarification Schoenfeld here employs is precisely the one used a half-century ago by Joseph McCarthy, when he emphasized that Truman officials like Dean Acheson and George Marshall were not, of course, Soviet agents themselves but mere "dupes" and unwitting accomplices of the Kremlin.

As for the distinction Schoenfeld presses between domestic and international surveillance, I refer him to this report in *The Washington Post* (December 16, 2005): "President Bush signed a secret order in 2002 authorizing the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on U.S. citizens and foreign nationals in the United States, despite previous legal prohibitions against such *domestic spying* [my emphasis], sources with knowledge of the program said last night."

Torture Logic

I am among the contributors to *Why I Turned Right*, which Jonathan Chait discussed in a recent TRB column ("Extreme Makeover," April 2). Chait claims that I have been "explaining away American torture"—indeed, that, by doing so, I resembled the deconstructionist literary critics I complained of in my essay, for whom (as he quotes me saying) "ethical responsibility is a fiction and good and evil are completely interchangeable." But I have never defended torture or explained it away. I have argued that certain nontorturous stress techniques may be appropriate for terrorist detainees trained to resist interrogation methods developed for lawful prisoners of war. Far from seeing "ethical responsibility" as a fiction, I have argued that accountability for the deplorable prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib belongs much further up the Pentagon chain of command. More generally, Chait is at pains to separate a good and unobjectionable liberalism from a kind of phantom leftism to which, he thinks, the contributors to *Why I Turned Right* are overreacting. After all, he says, "the Brookings Institution does not take its principal intellectual inspiration from Michel Foucault." Perhaps not. But identity politics is currently inseparable from the "actual liberalism" that Chait is so proud to defend. I will be happy to grant Chait's point when I see "actual liberals" oppose racial and gender preferences and reject racially gerrymandered voting districts or defend universal standards of behavior instead of vilifying conservative social critics for "blaming the victim." I mocked my early, unthinking acceptance of the rhetoric of victimology in *Why I Turned Right*. Chait suggests that he was wiser than I in his undergraduate years. I believe it. A lot of people were.

Heather Mac Donald
Senior Fellow, Manhattan Institute

Jonathan Chait responds:
Mac Donald has written, "None of the stress techniques that the military has used in the war on terror comes remotely close to torture." But *The New York Times* has reported that the techniques used at Guantánamo Bay include shackling prisoners in uncomfortable positions for hours on end until they soil themselves, prolonged sleep deprivation, and other things that I and most people would consider torture. Furthermore, Mac Donald's examples are very poor. Republicans as well as Democrats employ racial and gender preferences, unless Mac Donald thinks it's normal for a white male of Rod Paige's qualifications to be elevated to the president's Cabinet. And liberals constantly denounce racially gerrymandered districts. They remain in place because black politicians and Republicans jointly support them. ◆

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The XX Factor

How to run against a woman.

Kate Michelman is struggling to carry on a phone conversation without crashing her car as she barrels east across New Hampshire on her way to yet another campaign appearance with Elizabeth Edwards, wife of Democratic presidential hopeful John Edwards. This morning, Michelman, who for almost 20 years served as president of NARAL, was in Manchester with Edwards for the official opening of the campaign's state headquarters. Next, the two women popped over to Southern New Hampshire University for what the campaign was billing as a "Community Conversation," then to Concord for a "Conversation on Women's Rights," and now they're off to Portsmouth for "Coffee & Conversation." Late this afternoon, they are expected at a "House Party" in Durham, after which Michelman will catch a plane home, while Edwards goes on to a "Save Darfur" rally at the University of New Hampshire. That's a lot of partying, rallying, and conversing for anyone, admits Michelman, much less for the candidate's wife, who learned in mid-March that her breast cancer has returned. No matter: Michelman repeatedly assures me that she and Edwards have no intention of scaling back their push to educate voters about why, "if they care about the experiences of women and the conditions of their lives—if they care about women—they'll vote for John Edwards." The mission is "too important to be put aside," says Michelman. And, thanks to a certain New York senator's presence in the race, the battle for the hearts, minds, and votes of America's women has never been trickier.

In a typical cycle, John Edwards might expect to enjoy an edge with the ladies: He has the boyish good looks, the easy charm, the popular and outspoken wife (rendered simultaneously more sympathetic and more impressive by her battle with cancer), and the focus on gal-friendly issues like health care and the environment. It's little wonder that, when he was John Kerry's 2004 running mate, the campaign liked to send him out to appear on the daytime talk shows that target women. But 2008 is no ordinary race, and Hillary Clinton's team has not been shy about hawking its "Let's Make History!" story line, firing up the fairer sex with visions of shattered glass ceilings and the long-deferred dreams of little girls.

Edwards is hardly the only man figuring out how to cope with America's first female presidential front-runner ever. For as long as there have been women candidates, there have been rules about how to run against them—what to say, what to avoid saying, which stereotypes to use to undermine their credibility. The strategies themselves are banal: Don't be a bully. Do raise doubts about a lady's leadership ability. Don't come across as patronizing. Do paint her as soft on issues like crime or national security. To be sure, such stereotyping requires an increasingly light touch. (It was just 23 years ago that the host of "Meet the Press" had the cojones to ask Geraldine Ferraro—a former New York prosecutor, mind you—"Are you strong enough to push the button?") But even the stalest clichés (tough men are leaders; tough women are bitches) and prejudices (pretty women aren't smart) can still resonate on a gut level. Kenneth Baer, a former campaign adviser to Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm, recalls how the Democrat's blonde beauty was an implicit negative in her 2002 race. Meanwhile, in his 2002 gubernatorial bid

WHITE HOUSE WATCH *With* **DREW FRIEDMAN**

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against Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Republican Bob Ehrlich once serenaded a crowd with the pop hit "Livin' La Vida Loca"; when he got to the line, "She'll make you take your clothes off and go dancing in the rain," he paused dramatically to ask: "We're not talking about Townsend, are we?" (Stay classy, Bob.) Even against an opponent as famously tough as Hillary Clinton, certain rules still apply. In his 2000 Senate run against the former first lady, Republican Rick Lazio invaded her personal space during a televised debate, brandishing a pledge to renounce soft money. Viewers found the gesture menacing, and—wham!—just like that, Lazio proved himself a bully.

That said, everyone agrees that the junior senator from New York is not your "typical" female candidate, and a strong strain of Hillary Exceptionalism exists among operatives in both parties. Some classify Clinton sui generis simply by dint of her fame, history, and polarizing persona. "In a way, Hillary Clinton almost transcends gender," says Democratic media guru Anita Dunn. GOP pollster Frank Luntz notes that Clinton lacks many of the usual pros and cons of female candidates. "She doesn't have to prove she's tough enough or smart enough," he contends. On the flip side, "She does not have a sense of warmth," and she lacks "the family advantage"—i.e., charming tales about soccer carpools and PTA potlucks. Bottom line, says Luntz: "Put gender aside. Just treat her like you would any other candidate."

Certainly, Clinton is no Ségolène Royal, the socialist defeated in this month's French presidential election, who spent much of the race emphasizing her femininity and pleading with women to back her as a way to "put an end to centuries of injustice." But, even as Team Clinton stresses its candidate's experience, political chops, and toughness (not traditionally "feminine" selling points), it also can't resist running that MAKE HISTORY! banner across the top of the campaign's website. And Luntz himself admits that Clinton's status as a role model for younger women is likely to be reflected at the ballot box. "We'll have the highest turnout among younger women that we've seen in a long, long time because of her," he predicts. Even Hillary Exceptionalism, it seems, must allow for certain demographic realities.

No one seems more aware of this than John Edwards. While most of Hillary's opponents are downplaying the gender issue (at least for now), the Edwards people are laboring to neutralize

it. And who can blame them? The Republican contenders can arguably ignore gender politics until after the primaries, but their Democratic counterparts must spend the next year or so fighting over a voter pool far more liberal, female, and Clinton-friendly than the nation as a whole. And, unlike fellow Democratic hopeful Barack Obama, Edwards doesn't have his own historic counternarrative to fall back on. He's the one top-tier Dem with too much testosterone and too little melanin to be any sort of barrier-breaker.

So FURIOUS strategizing must compensate for the vagaries of nature. Earlier this year, there was the campaign's bungled hiring of two feminist bloggers—whose past anti-religion postings made them prime targets for scalp-hunting conservatives and ultimately rendered them too hot for the campaign—a nod not simply to the left but to younger women in particular. More successfully, the Edwardses wooed and won Michelman, who, in January, signed on as a senior adviser. Beyond the buzz value of Edwards's snagging one of feminism's biggest names—in the wake of Michelman's announcement, the chattering class was atwitter about her implicit rejection of Hillary—Michelman's pro-Edwards spiel is exceedingly shrewd. Far from dismissing the specialness of a female front-runner, Michelman embraces it. "It is an extraordinarily historical moment," she marvels, and especially gratifying for a veteran gender warrior like herself. But … . "After full consideration of this historic field of candidates," she concluded that it is in fact John Edwards who "will appeal to the broadest array of concerns, hopes, aspirations, and needs of women." Take that, Hil.

The Michelman–Elizabeth Edwards combo packs a potent one-two punch. While Michelman stands ready to question Clinton's policy stands, Edwards makes a perfect foil for Hillary the woman. With a persona as warm and casual as Clinton's is cool and aloof, Elizabeth was wildly popular in 2004 and has proved even more so this time around. Her backstory has something for every woman: A smart, ambitious attorney (just like you-know-who), she maintained a family-friendly work schedule until the death of her 16-year-old son, Wade, in 1996, after which she abandoned her practice altogether. A couple of years later, in her late forties, she underwent fertility treatments to have two more children and has since focused her energies on motherhood and on her husband's political career. When, at a 2006 luncheon sponsored by *Ladies' Home Journal*, Edwards asserted that her life choices had made her "more joyful" than Hillary, the remark reverberated in political circles. Edwards said she'd been misquoted, and the Clinton camp reported that Edwards had called to apologize. The underlying issue, however, is likely to linger.

As for "the C word," when the news broke that Edwards's cancer had returned and spread to her bones, the immediate assumption was that the campaign would soon close up shop or that her condition would render Edwards (either in practice or in the minds of voters) less of an asset. So far, the opposite appears to be true. Edwards regards fighting for her and her husband's political vision as the best way to "carry on with her life," says Michelman, and there has been an outpouring of support and admiration for her decision. "Women are inspired by it," she says. More concretely, the campaign reported a spike in fund-raising following the March 22 announcement about Edwards's health.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether any Democrat can derail Hillary. And, the Clinton-hatred of their base notwithstanding, Republican candidates would do well to give some thought to how the XX factor could affect a general election. None of the current GOP crop seems well-equipped (in either personality or policy profile) to address the infamous "gender gap" the way George W. Bush did with his "compassion offensive" in 2000. Hillary may not be your typical female candidate, but she knows how to play politics—including gender politics—as well as anyone. Her competition, regardless of sex, race, or party, forgets this at its peril.

MICHELLE COTTLE

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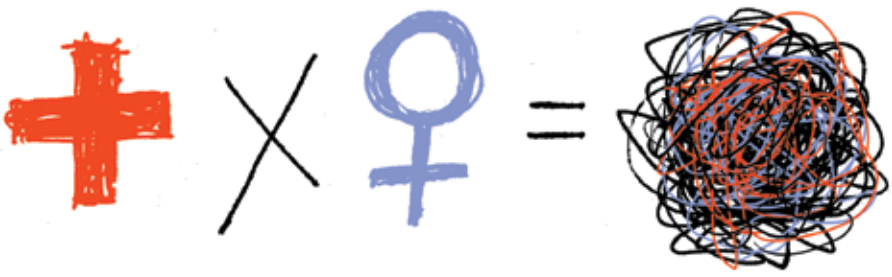

Partial Law

A lost history of abortion.

"Thank God for President Bush, and thank God for Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito," intoned Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention last week, after the Supreme Court announced its decision in *Gonzales* v. *Carhart*, the so-called partial-birth abortion case. But Land also should have thanked Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose majority opinion dangerously reframes the abortion debate.

Kennedy doesn't proceed from the question of harm to the unborn—the premise on which the congressional act in question is based. Instead, he reasons that the ban on D&X procedures—the medical name for what the anti-choice movement calls partial-birth abortions—should be permitted because it is meant to protect women from making a choice that goes against their nature. "Respect for human life finds an ultimate expression in the bond of love the mother has for her child," Kennedy declares. Concerned that women may learn the details of how the procedure is performed only after the fact, he writes, "The State has an interest in ensuring so grave a choice is well informed."

Kennedy's opinion undermines constitutional protections for a woman's right to make decisions established in *Roe* v. *Wade*. And, just as disturbingly, it summons up assumptions about women that go back to discredited paternalistic decisions of the Supreme Court. "It's only a couple of paragraphs in the decision," notes Yale Law School Professor Reva Siegel. "But it's alarming." In Kennedy's words, one hears the echo of the anti-choice movement's new emphasis on abortion as a de facto violation of something at the very core of women's being. Medical technicalities take up the bulk of the Court's majority opinion, but the reasoning concerns the nature of women and the integrity of their moral choices—an implicit rejection of the most mainstream tenets of modern feminism.

Legal abortion owes an enormous debt to the women's movement; without question, feminists were critical in the last stages of the push. But the idea of abortion as a necessity for women's well-being first came from liberals and moderates in the 1960s and even predated feminist arguments for a woman's right to choose. For nearly 50 years, Americans have been able to separate the more abstract arguments about morality and women's rights from the very concrete issues of women's integrity and their health. Kennedy repudiates this understanding by reviving antique views of women as well as endorsing the new pseudoscience of the anti-choice movement.

Often lost in the debate over D&X abortion is the fact that the procedure is exceedingly rare; in 2000, there were just 2,200 cases—or 0.17 percent of all abortions. The procedure is rare because it is used to end a pregnancy late in the second trimester or later, before viability, in a tiny number of cases when the woman's life is in danger. Abortions late in the second trimester are medically involved, potentially risky, painful, and emotionally difficult. So who waits that long?

The answer is simple: women and girls in states of duress. This includes teenagers who didn't realize they were pregnant, or kept hoping they weren't pregnant, or were too frightened to tell anyone and get help (a common plight of incest victims). It also includes women whose pregnancies have gone wrong, such as women found to be carrying fetuses with serious central nervous system anomalies like hydrocephaly.

Ironically, it was precisely women like these, caught in painful circumstances, who first prompted public awareness of the need to overhaul abortion law. Before *Roe* v. *Wade*, abortion was as widely practiced as it is today, an open secret despite being illegal everywhere. But, in the late '50s, medical professionals faced a public health crisis as the abortion rate soared and the woman hemorrhaging from botched procedures became a familiar presence in hospital emergency rooms. Reformers began by attacking laws that prevented women whose lives were threatened or who were pregnant as a result of rape or incest from getting abortions. They called for laws allowing "therapeutic" abortion in "hardship" cases to be authorized by a hospital physicians' committee. In the '60s, the idea of therapeutic abortions gained force, garnering support from liberal Protestants and Jews, lawyers, psychiatrists, and social workers. Small bands formed across the country to press the issue in state legislatures. Two panics about birth defects—the thalidomide scandal and a 1965 rubella epidemic—stirred up discussion about what it meant to a woman to give birth to a severely damaged child. The idea of urgent need expanded from a pregnancy that endangered a mother's life to one that endangered her mental health. By the late '60s, reformers had won laws for therapeutic abortion in a number of states.

Over the short run in the '60s, therapeutic abortion really only showed the urgent need for a much bigger change. The therapeutic "exception" never worked: Applications were few, because women were put off by the time-consuming and judgmental screening process before all-male physicians' panels, and most women didn't qualify, anyway. Committees strained to minimize the number of applications they approved, and there were horror stories of women denied—such as the woman confined to her bed by polio. And committees weren't the only problem. In one famous case, a middle-class African American woman from Long Island, pregnant with a rubella-scarred fetus, was approved for a therapeutic abortion but had the bad luck to fall into the hands of a fervent anti-abortion Catholic physician, who tricked her into believing the fetus was normal and sent her home.

But, in the long run, the push for therapeutic abortion made Americans of both sexes think publicly about what pregnancy meant to those most closely involved: the woman, her family, and the child who could be born unwanted. Considerations of how dire the circumstances of pregnancy were in hardship cases led to reflections about the hardships any pregnancy could cause. Large numbers of people—many of them well outside the radical politics of the decade—came to believe that the state should refrain from intruding into a decision that, in the end, was the pregnant woman's to make. In 1966, *The Saturday Evening Post*—as conventional as they came—ran the headline "We Should Legalize Abortion," and *The New York*

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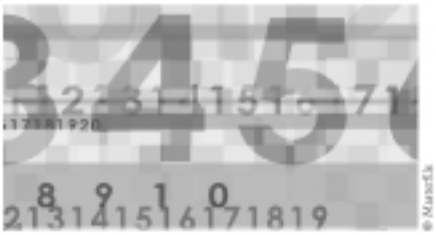

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About Your Professor

Professor Arthur T. Benjamin is Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College, where he has taught since 1989. He earned a B.Sc. from Carnegie Mellon University in 1983 and a Ph.D. in Mathematical Sciences from Johns Hopkins University in 1989. The Mathematical Association of America honored him with regional and national awards for distinguished teaching in 1999 and 2000 and named him the George Pólya Lecturer for 2006–08.

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Times editorialized for legalization the next year. By 1970, there were initiatives in many state legislatures and a public that was leaning toward legalizing abortion, period.

It's interesting to note that D&X is used to end pregnancies in the kinds of situations in which there has long been a consensus that the woman's wishes should be honored. It's as if the anti-choice movement is going back to the '60s and trying for a do-over, dismantling the first premise on which most could agree—the right of a pregnant woman in a terrible bind to get a legal abortion from a competent physician, one who will put her health and safety first.

So how, despite public opinion, did abortion opponents manage to waylay and subvert pro-choice measures in state after state before 1973? The answer lies in the intractable determination of religious conservatives to recast abortion as a debate over the primacy of child-bearing and the personhood of the fetus, rather than as an issue of women's well-being. The Catholic Church was the first to attack abortion: Even before *Roe*, the Church hierarchy coordinated a parish-by-parish effort to stop any sort of reform bill, including those for therapeutic abortions. This predominantly Catholic movement didn't broaden into the more ecumenical one we know until the late '70s and early '80s, when Protestant evangelicals first joined in. In 1978, Jerry Falwell preached his first sermon on abortion; a year later, the newly formed Moral Majority put abortion at the top of its list of secular humanist scourges. Two years later, Ronald Reagan was the first presidential candidate in U.S. history to run on a party platform that condemned abortion. Over the next twelve years, the anti-choice movement battened onto fears of adolescent girls gone wild, securing parental consent laws in many states. It gained public platforms to proselytize and intimidate, with ersatz "scientific" revelations about the subjective life of the fetus. And, as the troops heated up in the 1980s, the far right wing turned violent—picketing and firebombing clinics, assaulting women, and murdering physicians.

The turn to terrorism did not serve the movement well. Americans recoiled from the violence and a "mainstream" right-to-life movement that refused to condemn it. In addition, although anti-choice forces succeeded in making it hard for women and girls to get abortions (there are reputed to be places in the West where a woman has to drive 600 miles for an abortion), they never made a dent in the 60-plus percent of Americans who supported legal abortion.

By the late '90s, some right-to-life strategists began to search for a softer, more "woman-friendly" message. They mixed the old rhetoric of protecting fetuses with new claims to defending women: from the pressures of loutish male partners too selfish to consider fatherhood, from domineering feminists, and from the depression and "post-abortion syndrome" that supposedly ensues. In *The American Prospect* last October, Siegel and Sarah Blustain reported how, in South Dakota, the strategy was tested with the aid of a willing red-state legislature that sponsored a task force on abortion. The task force issued a 70-page report in 2006 that was essentially a brief from anti-choice groups: Its intent was to show that women who sought abortions did not know their own minds and that they would inevitably be harmed by an act that violated the bond between them and their child. The report led to the draconian South Dakota law that made performing any abortion, except to save the life of the mother, a felony for physicians. Voters overturned the law several months later. What's dismaying, though, is that the logic and pseudoscience behind it survived to inform Kennedy's opinion in *Gonzales* v. *Carhart*.

To comprehend just how bad the Court's decision is, you need look no further than Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's powerful and lucid dissent. Ginsburg notes Kennedy's reversion to "ancient notions about women's place in the family and under the Constitution." In Kennedy's statement about the legal salience of "the bond of love the mother has for her child," she hears echoes of the Court's 1908 ruling in *Muller* v. *Oregon* that labor laws for women must be geared to the "proper discharge of her maternal functions." In the Court's assumption of the role of benevolent overseer of the pregnant woman's psyche—preventing her from casually making "so grave a choice"—she hears resonances of the 1873 case *Bradwell* v. *Illinois*, which asserted that "the paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wives and mothers."

Ginsburg knows those decisions intimately, because she devoted much of her career to dismantling the assumptions they enshrined in the law about women's domestic and maternal nature, their limited capacities to function in the world, and their need for supervision and guidance. In the '70s, she helped lead a legal revolution to undo restrictions that pushed women into second-class status. It's this comprehension of the Constitution's meaning that Ginsburg felt compelled to recall for her colleagues: "This Court has repeatedly confirmed the destiny of the woman must be shaped … on her own conception of her spiritual imperatives and her place in society." Justice Kennedy and four of his colleagues showed profound indifference to that distinguished history. Now the woman who engendered sympathy and respect for her difficult choices is treated as a lesser being who requires the greater wisdom of the law to pull her back from a moral precipice.

Christine Stansell

Christine Stansell, Edwards Professor of History at Princeton, is writing a book on the history of feminism.

Snub-continent

The Pat Buchanan of India.

Mumbai, India

Last year, a 25-year-old Mumbai native named Savita went out with her boyfriend to celebrate Valentine's Day. (The names of characters in this piece have been changed to protect their identities.) The couple chose an expensive Middle Eastern restaurant in Mumbai. But, a few minutes into the meal, a group of men burst in and began to verbally harass them. "Why are you celebrating this American holiday?" they demanded before leaving. After Savita and her date finished their meal, they found the same group waiting for them outside. The men beat Savita's companion badly. "He bled all over and had to be taken to the doctor," Savita recalls. "His nose was broken."

Savita told me this story as we sat in a quiet Thai restaurant near the ocean. As its variety of cuisines demonstrates, this cosmopolitan port city of 13 million is a diverse mélange of cultures, home to both Bollywood and the Bombay Stock Exchange. It's not the kind of place where one expects to find a violent hoard of Valentine's Day–haters. But not only does such a group exist—it is the city's ruling political party. The men who attacked Savita's friend were members of Shiv Sena, a group of Marathi Hindus (Hindus from the Indian state of Maharashtra, which includes Mumbai) who, in elections this past February, re-secured their complete control of Mumbai's municipal government.

TOMASZ WALENTA

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The "Root Cause" of the Middle East Turmoil

Would peace descend if the Arab-Israeli conflict were resolved?

There are many who are convinced that the existence of Israel and its "alien" presence in the predominantly Muslim Middle East is the "root cause" of the ongoing and never-ending violence in the area and of terror in the world. James Baker, the former secretary of state and head of the U.S. Iraq Study Group (no friend of Israel and of the Jews), also propagates this "root cause" theory of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What are the facts?

Israel is a tiny country, with only six million inhabitants (a million of whom are Arabs). It is surrounded by 22 Arab countries, with 300 million people. Arab propaganda has convinced the world that Israel is the mighty Goliath compared to the puny Arab states. It is a supreme irony that six million Israelis, surrounded by implacable enemies who are fixated on their destruction, are considered a mortal danger to the Muslims and to the peace of the world. And that, if it were not for Israel and for the Jews, peace would descend upon the world and terror would cease.

> "…the lust for terror will not end until Arab-Muslims come to terms with the West and accept its predominant role."

Israel is not the "root cause" of this strife and turmoil in the Middle East. Violence and war are endemic in Arab society and in Arab history. Israel was not involved in the deaths of the millions who perished in the Iraq-Iran war. Israel certainly has nothing to do with the slaughter in Iraq, in which on an average day, 100 people or more are killed in the deadly and never-ending Sunni-Shiite conflict. And even though Israel is the common enemy, it has nothing to do with the daily killings between the rival factions of Palestinians. Arab-Muslims killed over a million of black Christians and animists in the Sudan and brought intolerable suffering to that impoverished region. The Sudanese government, dominated by Arab-Muslims, hasn't lifted a finger to help its citizens. The slaughter goes on. Israel is certainly not involved in that. The thousands whom Hafez Assad, the father of the current president of Syria, slaughtered in the city of Hama for having voiced opposition to his rule have no connection with Israel. Abdal Gamel Nasser, the self-appointed president of Egypt, mortal enemy of Israel and instigator of the Six-Day War, did not invade Yemen and gassed its people because of Israel. Saddam Hussein did not torture and kill tens of thousands of his own people and did not invade Kuwait because of Israel. The Lebanese did not stage their civil war and kill tens of thousands of their own people because of Israel. And there are many more examples of intra-Muslim and intra-Arab slaughter and mayhem. Israel was uninvolved in any of those.

And how about terror? Again, many believe that Israel is the "root cause" of the terror that Arab-Muslims have visited and continue to visit upon the world. The attack on our country on September 11, 2001, the destruction of the two U.S. embassies in West Africa, the bombing of trains in Spain, the murderous attacks on the London subway system, and so many other acts of cowardly terror would have taken place even if there were no Israel. They are a reflection of the hatred that the Muslim world harbors against the West and its institutions. That hatred has nothing to do with Israel. And many believe that if only the United States would withhold its support from Israel (and get out of Iraq), terror would cease and the world would no longer have to fear the scourge of suicide bombings, the devilish invention that Arab-Muslims have visited on the people of the earth. It is an illusion. That hatred would continue even if Israel would cease to exist tomorrow.

Many claim that Arab-Muslim terror is the result of despair, hopelessness and poverty. But that is patently absurd. The Arabs are some of the richest people in the world, although, instead of using their enormous wealth to benefit their people, they squander it in bizarre luxury excesses for a privileged few. The nineteen hijackers were not poor or desperate. They were, without exception, well-educated people, members of upper-middle class families. The leaders of such Arab-Muslim terror organizations as Hamas, Hezbollah or Islamic Jihad are educated people, from the upper reaches of their societies. No, terror is the customary response of Arab-Muslims to express their grievances. It is a result of their culture and of their history. It has nothing to do with Israel and would not be any different if Israel had never existed or would cease to exist.

The proclivity to war and to terror on the part of the Arab-Muslims has nothing or little to do with Israel. It is the result of their culture and of their history. For centuries, the historical Muslim empires of the Middle East were confident societies, which long led the despised Christian West in terms of science and economic well-being, as well as in military power. But then a lasting reversal and decline set in, in which the loss of Spain and the ascent of the West and its towering achievements in every human endeavor played a key role. This thirst for war against each other and against the hated infidels – foremost among them Americans and Israelis – and the lust for terror will not end until Arab-Muslims come to terms with the West and accept its predominant role. But that may take a very long time – in fact, it may never happen.

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Shiv Sena, which means "Army of Shiva" (the founder of the Maratha Empire), incites violence and unrest over what it deems improper cultural or religious events—from Valentine's Day to Richard Gere's recent public smooch of Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty. More ominously, it preaches contempt for foreigners, Muslims, and non-Marathi Hindus.

As Shiv Sena demonstrates, India is going through a debate over immigration and national identity very similar to our own. But, instead of hanging out by the border peering through binoculars, India's Minutemen are actually running one of the country's major states—the Indian equivalent of California. In Mumbai, Shiv Sena has even promised to end migration into the city. How did a party bent on exploiting every ethnic and religious fault line manage to gain control of the most cosmopolitan city in the world's largest multi-ethnic democracy? And what does this tell us about the United States?

On a hot morning in March, a 28-year-old bellman named Firoz, whom I had met through a mutual friend, brought me to Shiv Sena's nondescript, multi-storied headquarters to hear a speech on Marathi values. As a foreigner, I was seated separately from Firoz in the women's section, which is closer to the stage; the party may not be too fond of American culture, but it treats foreign journalists with fawning courtesy. Meenakshi, the young woman sitting next to me, took my pen and notepad and translated from the Marathi: "He is telling all of us, young Marathis, to fight for our rights. We must not let anyone take away what is ours." "Long speech," I scribbled as the speaker droned on. In front of my words, she wrote "a very" and grinned.

Afterward, I mentioned to Meenakshi that she did not strike me as someone who would follow Shiv Sena. "Everyone in my neighborhood does," she said. "It would not make any sense for me to oppose them."

Much of Shiv Sena's success lies in the displacement of the Marathi community in central Mumbai. In the 1950s, immigrants from all over India began to pour into the city for jobs, and many native Marathis began to feel marginalized and shut out of the workforce. Into this void stepped Bal Thackeray—"the Tiger," as his supporters call him—a former political cartoonist bent on reasserting the rights of Marathis. In 1966, he founded Shiv Sena; and, by 1984, he had allied it with the BJP, the major right-wing Hindu nationalist force in India. Over the next two decades, international companies moved in and real estate prices skyrocketed, forcing Marathis into the suburbs. "After the economy began to heat up, the Marathi got dispersed and dislocated," says Kumar Ketkar, the editor of the Marathi paper *Loksata* ("People Power"). Thackeray capitalized on this—vocally championing the rights of Marathis. By the mid-'90s, the "Sons of the Soil," as Shiv Sena is called, had completely taken over Mumbai's government. (Thackeray had the city, formerly the anglicized "Bombay," renamed in an "anti-imperialist" gesture in 1995.)

Shiv Sena activists take out their rage on a helpless Valentine's Day card.

Thackeray's rise has not been without controversy: He is widely assumed to have been behind the 1992 Hindu-Muslim riots, in which approximately 1,200 Muslims were killed, and a variety of other attacks on non-Hindus. As for Thackeray's affection for the Führer, he told an Asian newspaper, "I am a great admirer of Hitler, and I am not ashamed to say so! … Actually, we have too much sham-democracy in this country. What India really needs is a dictator who will rule benevolently, but with an iron hand."

Shiv Sena is currently led by Uddhav Thackeray, Bal's son. (Bal's nephew Raj has started his own political party that is, by some accounts, even more extreme. He recently told a crowd of Marathis to "serve a tight slap" to job-seekers from the eastern state of Bihar, a phrase that was repeated to me by several Shiv Sena bosses.) When the rally concluded, an aide took Firoz and me up a few floors to meet with Uddhav, who had decided to skip the event. At least 30 men were sitting patiently in the large waiting room outside his office. To the sound of chanting and the assembled crowd rising, Uddhav finally entered the waiting room. He was dressed casually in jeans and a pink polo shirt and seemed unfazed by all the excitement. "You have come all the way from America because America now knows about Shiv Sena," he said. He then turned his attention to the Bangladeshi immigrants streaming into Mumbai. "The jobs must go to Marathi people," he said. "You have the same problem in America. But you do not have Shiv Sena in America. Shiv Sena will do what is needed to protect Marathis."

Contrary to Uddhav's words, however, America is unlikely ever to have a Shiv Sena. While the party has managed to gain strength as Marathis in Mumbai have experienced displacement, its success is also a consequence of what Delhi-born scholar Sunil Khilnani calls India's "internally homogenous communities, each insulated from the others." In addition, the legacy of the caste system has inured Indians to a society where one group governs solely in its own interests. In contrast, in the United States, the amorphous national identity of being American works to supersede ethnic and religious allegiances.

The danger Shiv Sena poses to democracy in India became even clearer to me after Firoz and I left the rally. "It is too bad that you did not take a picture with Uddhav and I," Firoz said as we walked past the cricket fields near the University of Mumbai. He had told his friends and neighbors about the time he had been spending with Shiv Sena, and he wanted a picture to prove it. "Are they Marathi Hindus like you?" I asked. He laughed. "I am not Marathi, nor am I Hindu," he replied. "My family is Muslim." I was incredulous. Surely he knew Shiv Sena's opinion of his faith. "It is much harder now to tell certain people you are Muslim," he explained. "Some of my friends know that I am Muslim. Others do not. I tell people that I support Shiv Sena. So does my family. It is much easier for us this way."

Isaac Chotiner

REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE/JAYANTA SHAW/NEWSCOM

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Pickup Artist

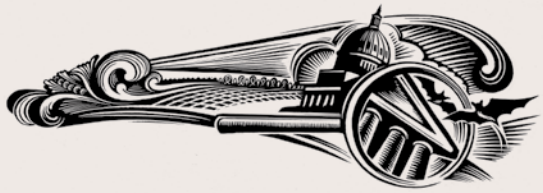
Populist poseur Fred Thompson.

By the time Fred Thompson decides whether or not to join the presidential fray, you will have heard the story of his red pickup truck at least a dozen times. The truck in question is a 1990 Chevy, which the famed statesman-thespian rented during his maiden Senate campaign in 1994. The idea was that Thompson would dress up in blue jeans and shabby boots and drive himself to campaign events around Tennessee. Upon arriving, he'd mount the bed of the truck and launch into a homespun riff on the virtues of citizen-legislators and the perils of Washington insider-ism. For good measure, he'd refer to himself as "Ol' Fred" and the Chevy as "this ol' baby."

There was no real reason to think the tactic would work. Thompson's own campaign manager dismissed it as "gimmicky and hokey." Thompson, after all, had spent the previous two decades as a well-paid Washington lobbyist and sometime screen actor. He was about as close to being a salt-of-the-earth Southerner as Truman Capote, and it was a stretch to think average Tennesseans wouldn't pick up on the dissonance. Yet the gambit proved wildly successful. Thompson was down big to Democrat Jim Cooper when he initialed his car-rental agreement. He went on to win the race with more than 60 percent of the vote.

It's tempting to credit Thompson's success at populist play-acting to his numerous tours in Hollywood. If ever there were a millionaire who could persuade voters of his regular-guy bona fides, it would be the man who, in *The Hunt for Red October*, lectured Alec Baldwin that "the Russians don't take a dump … without a plan." But Thompson is hardly the only Republican to have ridden phony populism to elective office. In 2003, Haley Barbour, perhaps the most accomplished Washington lobbyist of his generation, pig-in-a-poked and dog-won't-hunted his way to the Mississippi governor's mansion. (One of Barbour's signature tricks was to have himself paged at Ole Miss football games.) And, of course, a certain Yale-educated Northeastern Brahmin reinvented himself as a brush-clearing country boy en route to winning the White House in 2000. These days, phony populists win with such regularity that you've got to look beyond any particular candidate to find an explanation.

Liberals, who go positively batty over such acts of political fraud, have no



On the Hill

THE LIFE COACH

John Boehner, sensitive New Age leader.

The morning after President Bush vetoed the Democrats' Iraq supplemental bill, House Minority Leader John Boehner was in a House press conference room, working himself into a fine lather. With his pinstriped suit, sherbet-orange tie, and deep tan, Boehner looked less like a congressman than a Miami kingpin's flamboyant defense lawyer—and he mimicked one in manner, peering down the mics at the journalists clustered before him with unconcealed hostility. But after each sentence bashing Democrats came a strange punctuation: The corners of Boehner's lips would stretch up for an instant into a Mad Hatter smile and then reset to a resolute frown a moment later. "Mr. Boehner, Mr. Boehner, do you—I know you don't want to get into specifics," one reporter stuttered. "But do you personally support the concept of having consequences if the Iraqis fail to make political progress?" "I am not going to negotiate here in the press gallery," Boehner harrumphed. Wacky little smile. Resolute frown. "The last time I looked around this room, there aren't any votes here." Smile. Frown.

Boehner's smile reminded me of the grin he debuted about a month after he took over as House majority leader for Tom DeLay in 2006. The election polls were looking awful, and the Samarra mosque bombing was drawing attention to difficulties in Iraq. "I was letting all of this stress get to me," he recalls. "So, one day, in about the middle of March, I got up and told myself, 'Today, no matter what happens, I'm going to smile all day long.'" Smiling—even if you're faking it—releases endorphins, the brain's happy chemicals. The trick seems to have worked. "I've never had a bad day since!" Boehner chortles.

Seven months after Boehner learned to conquer his self-defeating behaviors and achieve a positive lifestyle, Republicans suffered a devastating midterm defeat. Boehner—whose affable manner evokes less the battle-grizzled captain than the life coach—was tasked with keeping the demoralized troops in line. Republicans accustomed to a sterner sort of leader were skeptical. "There is discussion about whether or not he'd be aggressive," fretted Republican Representative Patrick McHenry in January.

But, three months later, Republicans are marching in line under Boehner's command. They also seem to have discovered the best rebound boyfriend a girl could have. "He's a great listener," gushes Republican Conference Chair Adam Putnam. No one ever said *that* about Tom DeLay.

In the wake of last November's election rout, Republicans wept on the House floor; one couldn't get out of bed for the shock. In this apocalyptic environment, many Republicans developed an attitude of every survivor for himself. "What we first heard when we'd lost the majority was, 'These guys are all free agents now,'" says a House Republican aide. "There's no reason to keep the majority boat afloat!"

David Cowles

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As Congress began in January, Republicans fled their leadership in huge numbers: Eighty-two joined the Democrats on the minimum-wage increase, 68 flipped off the administration on the 9/11 Commission bill, 36 voted to repeal big-oil tax breaks. Iraq looked like it could prove to be the party's final breakdown. The Republicans' own whip count showed around 60 members were ready to sign onto the Democratic nonbinding resolution condemning Bush's surge.

But, as the debate neared, Boehner clicked into full pep-rally mode. His team distributed message points to everybody, "from the members on down to the receptionist answering phones," recounts a Republican aide. It printed dozens of props—poster-boards, photos, blow-up graphs—and handed them out to the troops to inspire their speeches. And Boehner carefully orchestrated the debate's flow, closing it with Texan Sam Johnson, who spent seven years as a POW in Hanoi. "Little did I know, back in my rat-infested, three-by-eight dark and filthy cell, that, thirty-four years after my departure from Hell on Earth … I would be on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives … urging Congress to support our troops," Johnson declared on the debate's last day, gesturing with his withered arm. Even the Democrats in the chamber were moved to join Republicans for a standing ovation.

Watching the orators draw a Manichean contrast between themselves and their surrender-happy opponents, waffling Republicans began to feel their GOP pride surging. "There are some three dozen members whose final vote was affected by nothing more than what was happening on the floor, that we were winning the p.r. war," says the aide. In the end, only 17 Republicans went with Democrats in voting for the nonbinding resolution. As Republican Chief Deputy Whip Eric Cantor puts it, "Boehner pumped us up!"

From then on, Boehner made pumping them up his explicit strategy. When a Republican sticks it to a Democrat on the floor, the leadership team sends the caucus a group pride e-mail. Boehner has also pushed motions to recommit—a tactic where the minority stalls a bill that could otherwise pass. The goal, as Boehner explains it, is to build a sense of triumph. "Having a few wins makes members feel better," he says.

Boehner's colleagues describe him as the coach who mixes that hoo-ah, football-field spirit with self-esteem-building: You are important! Some Republicans rave about his daily leadership meetings, designed so nobody goes to bed angry. Others contend Boehner embodies the famous Newtism—"Listen, learn, help, lead"—more fully than Newt did. "Newt talked about that a lot, but it was always my management style," Boehner agrees. Asked to give a recent moment when he listened to a member, Boehner laughs. "Oh, wow. I'm awful at ever remembering these anecdotes. How many conversations do I have a day? Several hundred, at a minimum."

In fact, Boehner's success may consist less of actually listening and more of pretending to listen while herding Republicans where he thinks they should go. Some Republicans keen to break with the party on the war have found themselves swept into the pack by forces they don't even quite understand. "I think there's certainly a lot of members who want to continue to vote and voice their opposition," says another Republican aide. "But they don't have the ability at this point to vote their conscience."

Those who saw him as a softie after the election had probably forgotten the ambitious Boehner of the '90s. He cut his teeth in the Gang of Seven, a group of confrontation-hungry freshmen (including Rick Santorum) who raged against the House bank scandal. Then he was appointed Republican Conference Chair, but, among the bigger personalities jostling for control, nobody listened to the personable Boehner. By 1998, he had been pushed out of the leadership altogether.

Now, Boehner's moment has come—not at the pinnacle of Republican power, but at its nadir. "When you're comfortable with yourself, you can go through the worst you have to do," Boehner tells me, summing up his philosophy. It's the kind of vaguely New Age self-help line an old-fashioned conservative would have snorted at. But, after their election meltdown, many Republicans seem willing to trade their new opportunity to break with leadership and voice individualism for Boehner's team spirit and warm embrace.

Eve Fairbanks

shortage of theories. Author Tom Frank laid out a popular one in *What's the Matter with Kansas*, arguing that the ersatz populists use hot-button social issues like abortion and gay marriage to divert attention from their plutocratic proclivities. There is clearly something to this, particularly in states like Kansas, where vast concentrations of economically marginal voters routinely elect tax-cutting social conservatives.

A rival explanation comes care of my colleague Jonathan Chait, who largely blames the press for enabling this scam: Republicans, according to him, realized long ago that political reporters are much more interested in making vague characterological pronouncements than reporting on matters of policy, or even relating biographical details. The GOP has exploited this quirk by placing char-

acter at the center of its campaign strategy, surrounding its candidates with the right atmospherics and mounting personal attacks on their opponents. Democrats, by contrast, believed themselves to be on the right side of most issues, and so they never invested much in these efforts. Again, there is much to be said for this analysis: Had every story written about the 1994 Tennessee Senate race begun, "High-priced GOP lobbyist Fred Thompson, speaking from the red pickup truck he rented to shore up his populist credentials, announced yesterday that …" the outcome of his campaign might have been different.

But the flaw in both these explanations, I think, is the premise that voters want bona fide populists but are somehow voting for fake ones instead. What if voters

David Cowles

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IRAQ VETS VICTIMS OF THE DRUG WAR

"Guys who wouldn't cry in a combat zone when their best friend was killed, they break down crying in front of me. And they tell me about all they can do now is bounce from job to job, drink, do drugs, and sit home contemplating suicide to end the pain."
– Cpl. Cloy Richards, USMC[1]

Our troops in Iraq have been fighting under conditions described as more dangerous and stressful than Viet Nam.[2] Many have served multiple tours. Ninety percent have been shot at or experienced bombings. Most know somebody who was wounded. One Army study showed that nearly a fifth of combat troops suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).[3]

Incredibly, they can be dishonorably discharged for alcohol related misconduct or illegal drug use even though this self medication was directly related to combat stress. And with a dishonorable discharge, all benefits are cancelled – including treatment for PTSD.[4]

But if the symptoms develop after they come home they may be in for even more grief. The Veterans Administration has a backlog of 600,000 disability cases with an estimated 640,000 to come.[5] This unanticipated flood of casualties means that soldiers who don't have urgent and obvious physical symptoms will just have to get in line.

And while they're waiting for treatment, if they turn to booze or drugs to get through the nights of horror, the VA will often turn them away. Some VA outlets require veterans to be alcohol and drug free for six months before they get treatment.[6]

Failure to provide prompt treatment for all returning troops is an outrage that demands action by Congress.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
info@csdp.org

For footnotes see http://www.csdp.org/publicservice/iraqvets_notes.htm

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want exactly what they're getting? What if they knowingly vote for fake populists because fake populism is a highly appealing proposition?

Liberals generally assume that what most Americans want from politics is a modest improvement in their lives: affordable health care, retirement security, good schools for their children. Under this paradigm, voters should prefer a politician whose life experience has taught him how tough it can be to get by without such staples. The fake populist is maddening because he professes to understand their concerns but has zero life experience (or at least zero recent life experience) that would make such understanding possible.

But suppose most working-class voters want something different than what liberals assume. Suppose that, in their heart of hearts, these voters don't aspire to be slightly better off than they are today; they aspire to be rich. And one of the ways they evaluate candidates, who are frequently rich themselves, is by wondering: Is this the kind of rich person I'd like to be?

Now ask yourself: If you were a working-class voter in Middle America, what kind of rich person would you want to be? Would you want to be the kind of rich person who eats at pricy French restaurants, plays classical guitar, and vacations among the cognoscenti in Sun Valley, Idaho? Or would you want to be the kind of rich person who snacks on peanut butter and jelly, reads *Sports Illustrated*, and kicks back at a ranch in the middle of nowhere?

The difference between you and the first kind of rich person is a vast cultural chasm. The only difference between you and the second kind of rich person is a hefty chunk of cash. If you somehow became rich overnight, there's no way you would be accepted among the first group—and you probably wouldn't want to be. But you could easily imagine yourself fitting in with the second group. And that's more or less what Fred Thompson and George W. Bush are suggesting when they throw on the shit-kickers and turn up the drawl. Sure, they're phonies. But, if you were rich, you'd want to be the same kind of phony—not a John Kerry kind of phony. Liberals see wealth and hominess as contradictory, but, for many working-class voters, they're complementary goods. They like their rich people homey and their homey people rich.

Not long after winning his Senate seat in 1994, Thompson got in his rented pickup and drove all the way to the entrance of the U.S. Capitol. By way of explanation, he told a reporter he had hoped to unleash the "doggonedest traffic jam that Washington, D.C., has ever seen from all those staff members trying to get out of town." It might have sounded strange to hear this from a rich Washington lobbyist who had recently owned an apartment only eight blocks from the White House. But that analysis misses the point. The kind of rich person willing to force the Washington establishment to admire the rear of his Chevy is, for many Americans, exactly the kind of rich person they want in office.

Noam Scheiber

Paper Tigers

Sulzbergers v. democracy.

It would be hard to find three families who have supported democratic principles around the world with more resolve than the Sulzbergers, the Grahams, and the Bancrofts. The first two scarcely need introduction. The Sulzbergers, of course, control The New York Times Company; Arthur Sulzberger Jr., the family's current sovereign, is both chairman of the board and publisher of its most prized asset, *The New York Times*. The Grahams own The Washington Post Company, now run by Donald Graham; his late mother, Katharine, famously stood up to Richard Nixon in the Watergate era and blazed a trail for female corporate executives. But, until this month, few outside the world of journalism could have identified the Bancrofts. In 1902, their ancestor bought Dow Jones & Company, publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, for the tidy sum of $130,000. Though uninvolved in the editorial operations, the family, now a diverse clan whose members are scattered from Hawaii to Rome, has quietly controlled it ever since.

I say "controlled" rather than "owned" because Bancroft descendants own only 24.7 percent of the shares. The rest of the stock—that is to say, the majority of it—is held by the public and trades on the New York Stock Exchange. If Dow Jones were structured like most public companies, the Bancrofts' "control" would be tenuous at best. But it isn't. Since 1986, Dow Jones has had two classes of stock. The "B" stock, owned by the Bancrofts and anyone else who invested prior to 1986, carries ten votes per share. Stockholders who invested since then (including the vast majority of the public shareholders) own the "A" shares, which get one vote apiece. This patently undemocratic arrangement has lofted the Bancrofts' control to a decisive 64 percent. To paraphrase George Orwell, all of Dow Jones's investors are equal, but some are decidedly more equal.

Both the Times and Post companies went public with similar, antidemocratic structures—and for a similar reason. The controlling families in each wanted to raise public capital but were unwilling to make the customary tradeoff this entails: that investors would be entitled to a proportionate vote in elections for directors and other matters—proposed takeovers, for instance—that might come before the stockholders. All three earnestly believe in their role as guardians of public institutions; indeed, this spring, when a Wall Street money manager called on the Times Company to abandon its undemocratic system, Graham took to the op-ed page published by the Bancrofts to defend the Sulzbergers, arguing that "to eliminate the company's two-tiered stock structure is to run crazy risks with the future of its most important asset, the *New York Times*." But this overlooks an important point: The three families are playing not just

Aussie-American baron Rupert Murdoch raises his fists to battle the Bancroft family for control of Dow Jones.

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WHO'S CASHING IN THIS WEEK?

Wade Horn

A former Health and Human Services assistant secretary, Horn oversaw a big increase in the Bush administration's "pro-family" spending. That includes an abstinence-promotion budget which has reached some $200 million (despite demonstrating zero effect on teenage hormones). But Horn hasn't abstained from the lure of the dollar. He recently signed up with Deloitte Consulting's public sector practice, and, according to *National Journal*, "wants to help clients navigate the maze of disparate federal funding streams for health and welfare services"—the very ones he once managed. Turns out you can advocate chastity and still be a pimp.

with their own dough but with the public's, too. Each has often warned in their coverage of *other* public corporations that the interests of shareholders, whatever the high intentions of management, are paramount.

Now there is revolution stirring among the oppressed masses, or at least class "A" shareholders. At the Times Company's annual meeting in late April, 42 percent of investors withheld votes for family-supported directors—a highly unusual show of disapproval. Of course, since the voters who really counted were in management's corner, the rebellion was merely symbolic.

But the shot that followed it, barely a week later, was not. Rupert Murdoch, the international media baron, offered through the aegis of News Corp to buy Dow Jones for $5 billion, or $60 a share—a cool 65 percent above the most recently quoted price. Dow Jones stock immediately soared to $56 (up about $20). After the briefest of intervals, the Bancrofts replied through their chosen intermediaries—lawyers and trustees—that family members comprising a slim majority of the votes were opposed to a sale. Dow Jones's board promptly rubber-stamped this decision and said it would take no action on Murdoch's bid.

Though Murdoch, like the *Journal*'s editorial page, is famously right-wing, News Corp and Dow Jones have vastly different cultures. (Full disclosure: I reported for the *Journal* for 17 years, and I still write for *SmartMoney*, a sister Dow Jones publication, as well as for *The New York Times Magazine*.) Murdoch relishes involving himself in editorial matters, even in the news pages; the Bancrofts are invisible, and neither they nor their proxies in management meddle with the news. Perhaps more importantly, while Murdoch has not been shy about sensationalizing his journalism, Dow Jones is an almost quaint paragon of traditional values. Judging from its scolding editorials, the *Journal*'s editors have yet to get over the sexual revolution of the 1960s. The Bancrofts' rejection thus has echoes of Edith Wharton: a five-generation-old dynasty, its best days (in a financial sense) behind it, snubbing the tasteless and arriviste Murdoch—who happens to be the most successful media titan of the last 50 years.

No doubt, Murdoch would bring change. But, thanks to the mass exodus of advertisers and readers to the Web, change, most often in the form of cost-cutting, has already hit the industry like a sledgehammer—including at Dow Jones, which recently shrank the *Journal*'s physical size. And it is extremely doubtful that, after spending $5 billion to acquire Dow Jones, Murdoch would take action to weaken the *Journal*'s value, which derives from its position as the respected authority on U.S. business.

In any case, what the Bancrofts want and what the employees want leaves out a critical voice—that of the other owners. And they have fared miserably. Previous to Murdoch's bid, Dow Jones was trading at $36.33, a level unchanged from 1983. That's an incredible dry spell considering the bountiful fortunes reaped in the stock market over the past quarter-century.

And blaming the stock's poor showing on the industry's woes will not quite fly. The *Post*'s stock rose nine times over that span; the *Times*' quadrupled. Dow Jones—which, from 1991 through last year, was run by a former prize-winning journalist, Peter Kann—badly mismanaged the transition to electronic news dissemination, allowing Bloomberg (another dastardly newcomer) to steal its thunder. And, despite an early start, it failed to leverage its brand overseas and establish anything like the preeminence it has at home. Kann was smarter than most when it came to distributing on the Internet, where the *Journal* is building a hefty paid circulation. Nonetheless, he and his predecessor built no enduring value over a full generation—an irretrievable loss of opportunity.

Public capitalism has a marvelous cure for such failings. When assets are underutilized, sooner or later an entrepreneur who thinks he can better exploit them ponies up and offers a premium. The process is dynamic and unpredictable and, in an industry rife with change, often convulsive for those involved. But a shibboleth of free enterprise, and of *Journal* editorials in particular, is that an optimal result emerges when rival players with differing ideas are allowed to joust in a competitive market. Think of the improvement in phone service since the bust-up of Ma Bell or in domestically made autos since the arrival of Toyota. This is why protection ultimately harms the businesses it seeks to "protect": It insulates management from the consequences of failure and thus from the impetus to change. For the *Journal* and other newspapers shaken by the emergence of the Internet, the best protection isn't a charity owner shielded from the market, but one who figures out how to prosper in it.

It's possible that Murdoch, for all the crassness he has displayed in down-market papers, might be that owner. At least, his ideas for strengthening Dow Jones are intriguing. He wants to invest *more* resources in news, in particular to strengthen the *Journal*'s brand in Europe and Asia, where the paper had been retrenching. And he wants to end the company's policy of paying out most of its profits in dividends and reinvest in the business instead. In short, he seems willing to

SCOTT J. FERRELL/NEWSCOM (TOP); TOMASZ WALENTA

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take on an expensive and long-term project to resuscitate a great American enterprise. Reportedly, Richard Zannino, who succeeded Kann and who boasts a background in business rather than in news, is favorably disposed. Perhaps he thinks Murdoch represents the best hope for long-suffering shareholders. And perhaps, if Murdoch's bid were honestly considered, other investors with different ideas would surface.

The real question is, who should be allowed to decide—the majority shareholders, or a family that long indulged ineffective managers and let the business's competitive position decline while milking it for dividends?

Granted, it's unhealthy for companies to be held hostage to the stock market's daily whims, but 24 years of a flat stock testifies to a sustained problem, not a whim. And the problem is intimately tied to Dow Jones's lack of democracy. One little-noted side effect is that, since the Bancrofts have been wary of using their stock for acquisitions (which would dilute their control), Dow Jones has never been a visible player in the market for media properties. This is not to say that dual shares *necessarily* mean failure. The *Post* has performed marvelously, as has Google, which also sports two classes of stock. The problem is that, should they stumble, they will be insulated from the stock market pressures that usually work to bring about improvement. That the Grahams have been model stewards does not justify the dual structure any more than a benevolent king justifies the institution of dictatorship. Someday the Post Company will have a new CEO, who may not be as able as the present one.

There are two routes to reform. One is to renounce the dual-share structure. The other is to sell or to go private with the help of a friendly investor. Newspapers don't *have* to be publicly owned, and even the most prominent ones are relatively small and eminently affordable. (The Times Company, like Dow Jones before the Murdoch bid, trades for less than $4 billion.) There are plenty of individuals, as well as corporations—Warren Buffett, General Electric—who could provide long-term, stable ownership. But, as long as the country's media barons enjoy public capital, the public should have a voice—and a vote. The Bancrofts and their ilk have too long espoused democracy everywhere but at home.

ROGER LOWENSTEIN

Roger Lowenstein is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine *and a columnist for* SmartMoney.

Meltdown

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With echoes of the great Hiroshi Sugimoto, Michal Ronnen Safdie's latest series of photographs evoke the nightmare of the earth's rapidly disappearing surfaces. Her work will be exhibited this month at the David Gallery in Los Angeles and on tnr.com.

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Civil Defense

Iraq needs a surge in bureaucrats.

Iraq is not Vietnam, but the United States is in danger of recreating one of the most tragic elements of that earlier war. Then, we repeatedly fed new resources—manpower, money, political capital—into the war without changing our strategic approach until it was too late. The additional increments of soldiers and supplies allowed us to keep the war going but were never enough to produce the results we sought. The effect was what Daniel Ellsberg called "the Stalemate Machine": a war effort that consumed tens of thousands of soldiers' lives and billions of dollars without ever bringing us any closer to victory.

Even with the recent changes in the U.S. approach toward Iraq, we still risk recreating the Stalemate Machine. However, if the problem in Vietnam was that Washington kept piling on the resources to keep the war going without changing the strategy, in Iraq the danger is the opposite. We are finally shifting toward the right strategy and tactics, and we have a first-rate team in place (General David Petraeus, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker) to implement them. But we are not committing the resources, particularly on the civilian side, to give them a fighting chance of making a difference—especially considering how late in the day we have finally made this shift.

As Petraeus has repeatedly said, all that the military can do is create a secure "space" (both literal and figurative) in which political and economic efforts can start to take hold. What Iraqis desperately crave (and deserve) is to be able to live their lives safe from criminals, terrorists, and ethnic cleansing; to get jobs that enable them to put food on the table; to have access to clean water, adequate gasoline, and regular electricity; and to enjoy social and governmental structures that provide these things and fix problems when they arise. The soldiers can handle the first clause of that sentence; the rest can only be provided by civilians. And, while there are plenty of problems on the military side of the equation in Iraq, the problems on the civilian side are far worse.

If Washington fails to address these problems, the likely result is that the surge will fail, just as other efforts have failed—even those that employed the right military strategy, tactics, leadership, and resources. The best example is the operation at Tall Afar in 2005, where a superb military commander trained his regiment in the right tactics and mounted a textbook counterinsurgency/stability operation to secure the town. For six months, this approach paid off brilliantly. But, when it became clear that there would be no commensurate civilian effort to deal with the political, economic, and social problems of Tall Afar, the campaign broke down. Today, Tall Afar is little better than it was before the operation began. If the administration doesn't take its lessons to heart, Iraq itself may suffer the same fate.

The first and most basic problem is that we simply do not have enough people with the kinds of skills to help the Iraqis rebuild their local economies and political systems. The brunt of this mission rests on the shoulders of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and Embedded Reconstruction Teams (ERTs). To their credit, the administration plans to triple the number of personnel on these teams from 150 to 450. But, for a population the size of Iraq, this is still a woefully inadequate number. As a rough comparison, in South Vietnam during the (successful, but tardy) Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program, the United States deployed 1,700 civilians for a population of about 18 million. That works out to one for every 10,500 people; by the same standard, Baghdad alone would require 566. Moreover, a great many civilians in Vietnam spoke some of the language and had spent time in the country beforehand, skills lacking in most of those we are now sending to man the PRTs and ERTs.

This shortage is not particularly surprising. The State Department recruits and trains men and women to serve as Foreign Service officers responsible for conducting diplomacy; they don't have many people who know how to rebuild a power grid or maintain an irrigation system. Nor does the Department of Agriculture, for that matter. Its personnel do things like draw up regulations for the care and feeding of livestock and determine subsidy policies for certain crops—few, if any, actually know how to care for and feed livestock or how to rotate crops. Fewer still have any idea how to do those things in an underdeveloped, war-ravaged, Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern country. But, while it may be understandable, it is still a huge problem that the administration must fix quickly.

But the problem, alas, is even more complicated than that. If a new slew of civilians were to arrive in Iraq, they would still fall within a dysfunctional chain of command, where civilian and

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military bureaucratic cultures clash frequently. Asked to provide a civilian official to be part of a key military planning unit, a senior State Department official reportedly dismissed the request with the remark that "planning is what the military does, not what diplomats do." Likewise, some military commanders in Iraq continue to see the civilian personnel they are paired with as being there to support the military mission; in fact, in counterinsurgency and stability operations, it is the military that should support the civilian efforts, not the other way around. The pressing need is for teams of civilians and military officers to be assigned to combined planning, assessment, and implementation cells that would coordinate these functions for both chains of command, thereby ensuring that, at some level, everyone is working from the same sheet of music.

In the past, both Washington and (especially) the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad have had a bad habit of micromanaging civilians. Personnel assigned to previous PRTs complain that the embassy tended to regard them as little more than reporting teams and assigned them irrelevant information-gathering tasks that were time-consuming enough to interfere with actual reconstruction. On other occasions, the embassy (or Washington) issued blanket rules that did not accord with the conditions in specific parts of the country and insisted that their field personnel conform to those guidelines. In the military, it is critical that the commander on the spot be given the latitude to immediately make decisions based on what he sees in front of him, and the same is true for the civilians waging the battle for Iraq. They, too, need to be able to do what they think best based on the circumstances as they find them.

One particularly meddlesome constraint has been a guideline effectively forbidding civilian personnel from venturing out beyond the Green Zone in Baghdad or military Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) in the field. Iraq can be a deadly environment, and we must do everything we can to protect our people; but, if we are going to keep them penned up in the FOBs, we might as well bring them back to Washington. The only way to help Iraqis rebuild is by having civilian experts out in the towns and neighborhoods working with them. If the members of the PRTs and ERTs are going to have a greater impact as part of the surge than they had in the past, they have to be able to move around freely, meet with Iraqis, hear their concerns, oversee projects, make adjustments, and gain firsthand information and experience.

There are no easy solutions to any of the problems listed above, but the Bush administration has denied itself one method of potentially alleviating many of them by refusing to engage the international community, and the United Nations, in the process of reconstruction. The United Nations is hardly a perfect organization, but it has the ability to reach out to a range of actors that the U.S. government—and particularly the Bush administration—cannot. The United Nations has a number of agencies with some real competence in the basics of nation-building. In addition, it can call upon a vast array of NGOs that have the very skills and experience that so few Americans possess but that are so desperately needed.

Such changes would likely require a U.N. political framework for reconstruction, possibly headed by a U.N.-authorized high commissioner (or some equivalent title), such as worked so successfully in Bosnia and East Timor. And that would mean sharing authority with the United Nations, a concession to which the U.N.-phobic Bush administration has seemed allergic since the fall of Baghdad. This could also be helpful in another way: A U.N.-authorized high commissioner could be empowered by the Security Council to override the wishes of the Iraqi government. It is for that reason that a number of high-ranking military officers have welcomed the idea—it would mean that it was someone else's job to tell the Iraqi government that it cannot block elements of the surge that would threaten the militias.

Unfortunately, it seems increasingly apparent that, at some point, it will be necessary for someone to be in a position to block the actions of the government in Baghdad, whose warlord-masters already seem to understand that the surge is designed to break their control over the streets of Iraq. One of the worst of the Bush administration's many mistakes in the early days of the occupation was the decision to prematurely hand back sovereignty to an Iraqi government dominated by thugs and thieves. This has created countless problems for Iraq, but the biggest obstacle it creates for the surge is this: Right now, most Iraqis look to militias, not the central government or the Americans, for security and basic services. The key to undermining the militias—and the insurgents—is to make it possible for the Iraqi people, most of whom dislike the insurgents and militias, to look to their own government for security and services.

But the Maliki government is *dominated* by militias, many of which inevitably will oppose U.S. efforts to marginalize them. Already, U.S. military units (and their ERTs) are being prevented from taking action in Najaf, Babil, and Maysan provinces because the coalition foolishly turned over control of those provinces to the militia-dominated central government. If the surge does begin to succeed, the militia leaders will become increasingly desperate and will doubtlessly use their control over the central government in Baghdad to try to bring it to a halt. And, when they do, the Bush administration is going to have a very serious problem either getting Baghdad to do the right thing or explaining why the United States must ignore the positions of a government it insists is sovereign.

Believe it or not, the Bush administration actually accepts all these diagnoses. What we don't know is whether it's gotten any better at fixing the problems it has identified. If not, then the new team, the extra troops, and the changes in strategy and tactics will do little more than prolong the stalemate. They may be just enough to keep Iraq from spiraling into unbridled mayhem and all-out ethnic cleansing, but they will not be enough to pull the country out of its nosedive and set it on a path toward sustainable stability, let alone eventual prosperity. And that means that, in January 2009, our new president will face the same awful set of choices that confronts us today. Only it will be worse, because, by then, we will have squandered more time, more money, more Iraqi and American lives, and probably our last chance to save Iraq.

Kenneth M. Pollack

Kenneth M. Pollack is director of research and senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and former director for Persian Gulf affairs at the National Security Council.

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Party Boy

Why the GOP's future belongs to Rudy.

THOMAS B. EDSALL

Columbia, South Carolina

William "Rusty" DePass named his dogs Goldwater, Reagan, and Bush. He is, needless to say, a conservative man, one who lives in a conservative state where the psychological scars of the Civil War still run deep. Six bronze stars on the west wall of the Capitol building here in Columbia mark the trajectory of Sherman's 1865 cannon fire from across the Congaree River. A state senator points me to the deep gouges on the building's banisters—gashes left, he says, by the sabers of Union officers charging the stairs on horseback. The Confederate flag still flies proudly in front of the statehouse. This is not, in short, hospitable political terrain for a drag-dressing, gay-friendly, abortion-loving, serially married, abrasive presidential candidate from New York.

Indeed, it is thanks to voters like DePass and states like South Carolina that Rudy Giuliani is widely thought to be doomed. "You need to suspend all your analytical faculties to believe the GOP will nominate for president a Republican who supports abortion rights and is pro–gun control and pro–gay rights," says Stu Rothenberg, author of *The Rothenberg Political Report*. "It just isn't going to happen, at least not in my lifetime." Political analyst Charlie Cook said six months ago that he would "win the Tour de France before Rudy Giuliani wins the Republican nomination." More recently, he told me he was "nervously" sticking to that prediction. "If Giuliani wins," he said, "it means that everything that I have ever learned about Republican presidential nomination politics is wrong."

But Giuliani now holds an eight- to twelve-point lead in national polls of GOP voters; and, perhaps more significantly, according to some surveys, he is running neck and neck with John McCain in states like South Carolina, where he was expected to fare poorly. DePass, whom I spoke to while traveling with Rudy recently in South Carolina, explains how he became an unlikely Giuliani backer. "I am more conservative than he is on the abortion question, and, probably on all the social issues, I would be to the right of him," he says. "But the overarching issue of our time is this war on terror. I have a son on his way right now to Afghanistan. I think Rudy Giuliani understands better than anyone the whole business about the war on terror, how it has to be waged."

Many observers believe Giuliani's early success is the result of his calculated move rightward—a savvy effort to trick conservative voters into believing he is really one of them. But there is another possibility, one that assumes a bit more intelligence on the part of conservative voters like DePass: What if we are witnessing not Rudy moving toward the rest of the Republican Party, but rather the Republican Party moving toward Rudy? What if the salience of a certain kind of social conservatism is now in decline among GOP voters and a new set of conservative principles are emerging to take its place? What if Giuilianism represents the future of the Republican Party?

Giuliani is the beneficiary of an upheaval within the Republican electorate—an upheaval that was catalyzed by September 11 but is becoming apparent only now, as the GOP hosts its first primary battle since the terrorist attacks. In brief, among Republican voters, the litmus test issues of abortion and gay marriage have been losing traction, subordinated to the Iraq war and terrorism. According to the Pew Research Center, 31 percent of GOP voters name Iraq as their top priority, and 17 percent choose terrorism and security. Just 7 percent name abortion and 1 percent name gay marriage.

The roots of this transformation predate September 11 and are partly the result of demographics. The lions of the Christian right—Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson—no longer dominate Republican politics as they once did. Their grip is slackening as their older followers are slowly replaced by a generation for which the social, cultural, and sexual mores that were overturned by the 1960s are history, not memory. In retrospect, these men reached the height of their power in the late '80s, when, by a 51-to-42 majority, voters agreed that "school boards ought to have the right to fire teachers who are known homosexuals." Now a decisive 66-to-28 majority disagrees, according to Pew. In 1987, the electorate was roughly split on the question of whether "AIDS might be God's punishment for immoral sexual behavior." Today, 72 percent disagree with that statement, while just 23 percent concur.

Giuliani is on the cutting edge of these trends, seeking to exploit new ideological lines between conservatism and liberalism. He rejects conservatism based on sexuality and reproductive issues; and his personal life amounts to a repudiation of conservatism focused on family structure, parental responsibility, fidelity, and lifelong monogamy. Ed Gillespie, former chairman of the Republican National Committee, notes that, even as voters learn about Giuliani's more centrist positions, "it does not seem to move his numbers." The former mayor, Gillespie says, is "challenging the notion that abortion and gay marriage are vote-determinative for everybody in the party."

It isn't just average voters who are driving this shift; many members of the GOP elite—whose overwhelming concern is cutting taxes, a Giuliani forte—would privately welcome the chance to downplay, if not discard, the party's rearguard war against the sexual and women's rights revolutions. Much of

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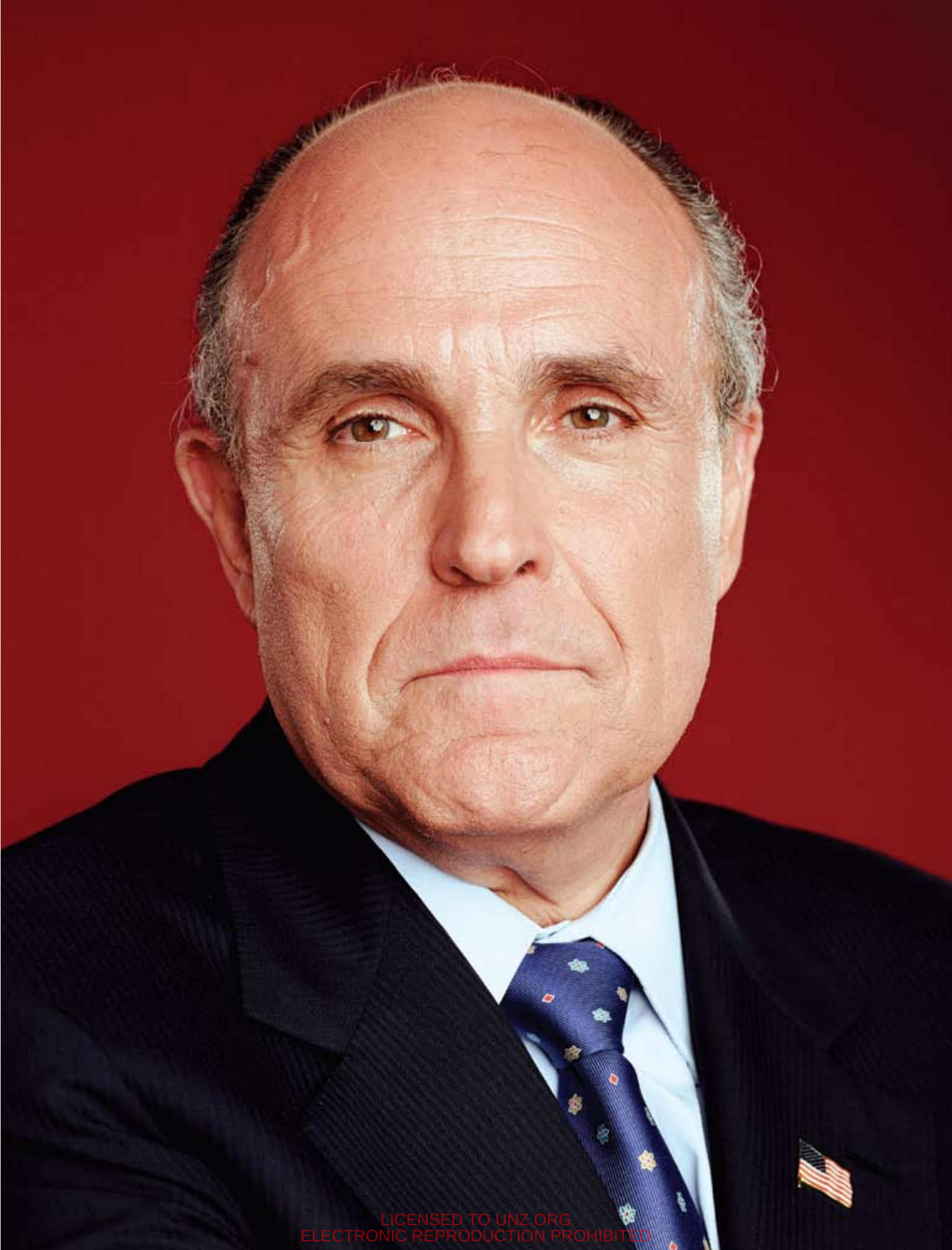

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the Republican Party's consulting community and country club elite always viewed abortion and gay rights as distasteful but necessary tools to win elections, easily disposable once they no longer served their purpose. Now, with most of the leading GOP contenders demonstrating at best equivocal support for the sexual status quo ante, that time appears to be drawing near.

For the moment, at least, September 11 has replaced abortion, gay marriage, and other social-sexual matters as *the* issue that binds the GOP together as a party. And no one, of course, owns September 11 quite like Rudy Giuliani. "This is a different world from 2000, when we last had Republican primaries without an incumbent president. 9/11 scrambled the priorities, and it may very well be that the war on terror pushes social issues down," says Whit Ayres, a Georgia-based pollster currently unaffiliated with any presidential campaign. "Giuliani is an authentic American hero, and Southerners love American heroes." No wonder the Yankee centrist suddenly has a chance in South Carolina.

If Giuliani's liberal inclinations on certain sexual issues represent his party's future, so does his decided conservatism on nonsexual domestic matters. Take, for instance, the question of how much risk is desirable in our economic system and what, if anything, government should do to encourage or discourage it. Ever since Reagan, Republicans have seen themselves as the party that embraces risk as a worthy feature of American life; and Giuliani, with his criticism of the social safety net, is very much an heir to this tradition. A *Weekly Standard* article recently quoted Giuliani as saying that Democrats want "a no-risk society." Explaining his opposition to health care mandates, he said, "We've got to let people make choices. We've got to let them take the risk—do they want to be covered? Do they want health insurance? Because ultimately, if they don't, well, then, they may not be taken care of. I suppose that's difficult."

Moreover, the centrality of risk to Giuliani's political philosophy is reflected in the kinds of people who have helped him raise a highly credible $15 million in the first quarter of this year. The list of his top fund-raisers is dominated by venture capitalists, takeover and merger specialists, hedge-fund operators, energy company CEOs, and nouveau riche investment bankers—men (and a few women) who have thrived in the financial culture of risk: Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens; billionaire investment banker Thomas Hicks; hedge-fund founder Paul Singer; multimillionaire Bill Simon; investment banker Ken Langone; and private-equity investor Douglas Korn, among others.

It is telling that Giuliani's fund-raising operation has tapped so deeply into Texas, a state where risk is central to the political and philosophical ethos. Texans treat campaign contributions like political venture capital, and they have been a financial mainstay of aggressive conservative candidacies and causes for two generations. They provided early backing to Ronald Reagan and to the House and Senate candidates who brought conservatism to Washington in 1980 and 1994. Texas does not rank among the top five states in donations for either Mitt Romney or McCain, and no Texas metropolitan area is a major source of cash for their bids. By contrast, for Giuliani, Texas ranks third—behind New York and California—while Dallas and Houston place second and fourth on his list of top donor cities.

Another element of the Reagan tradition to which Giuliani can lay claim—and that bolsters his chance of winning the nomination—is his appeal to white, working-class voters: the Reagan Democrats who became the angry white men of the 1990s. Their switch to the GOP fractured the class basis of the New Deal coalition, and they have been crucial to every Republican presidential victory since 1968. These are Giuliani's people. He is pro-cop, anti-Sharpton, the mayor whose meritocratic streak led him to end the open admissions policy at the City University of New York. He stood in a flat-bed truck in front of City Hall in 1992 and told 10,000 beer-drinking cops that a proposed civilian review board was "bullshit" designed "to protect David Dinkins's political ass." He famously lectured a mother whose son had been killed in a hail of police bullets, "Maybe you should ask yourself some questions about the way he was brought up and the things that happened to him"—rhetoric that harkened back to George Wallace's insistence that the government stop "coddling" criminals because they "didn't have enough asparagus as a child." Giuliani was the tough guy who restored order to a city verging on chaos by breaking the back of the liberal interest groups that had once dominated local politics; and many white, lower- and middle-income voters in the outer boroughs loved him for it. They, more than any other factor, are the reason he was twice elected mayor of one of the country's most Democratic cities. And their hero now uses the same tough rhetoric that he once used to talk about criminals to talk about terrorists.

Giuliani's brand of conservatism also speaks to the Republican longing for managerial competence—something that has been woefully lacking under Bush. The statistics from Giuliani's tenure in New York suggest that he knows how to get results: Under his leadership, the city's murder rate fell by 63 percent; overall crime declined by 52 percent; vehicle thefts dropped by 71 percent; the number of children in foster care fell by 34 percent; the welfare case load declined by 59 percent; unemployment dropped by 40 percent; construction permits rose by 51 percent; and personal income rose by 53 percent. Of course, Giuliani's role in improving life for New Yorkers has almost certainly been overstated—most of all by Giuliani himself. The city's drop in crime was part of a national trend that actually began under Dinkins, and the economic boom of the '90s didn't hurt, either. What's

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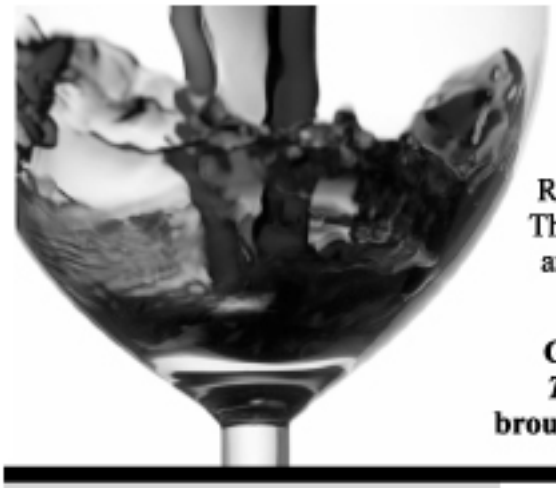

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more, Giuliani's managerial diligence is inseparable from his authoritarian streak, perhaps the least appealing aspect of his persona. Still, deserved or not, Giuliani's reputation as a skilled manager has been a very real asset in his campaign so far, allowing him to criticize Bush credibly on Iraq—the issue that, more than any other, symbolizes this administration's managerial shortcomings. "Here's what I would change," Giuliani told Larry King when asked how he would have handled the assault on Iraq. "Do it with more troops, maybe 100,000, 150,000 more." Giuliani harkens back to a time when Republicans were perceived as more competent, sober administrators than Democrats—and he affirms the nagging suspicion of many rank-and-file conservatives that Iraq could have been a stunning success if only George W. Bush weren't such a buffoon.

But perhaps the most striking way in which Giuliani captures the mood of contemporary Republican politics has nothing to do with ideology and everything to do with strategy. Both Reagan and Bush were masters of polarization. They calculated that it would be better to win by one vote, with a clear policy mandate, than to try to bring along a less committed 60 percent of the electorate with an appeal to consensus and compromise. In 2004, this strategy became clearer than ever, as Republicans sought to capitalize on deepening chasms between left and right. Deliberate polarization may or may not prove an effective strategy in the 2008 general election, but it is deeply attractive to conservative GOP primary voters whose antipathy to liberalism is intense.

Giuliani's entire career has been built on a willingness to polarize. Consider the vote totals in different neighborhoods in 1993, when he ousted Dinkins, New York's first black mayor. The election was close—Giuliani won by fewer than 50,000 votes—but the overall tally masked bitter partisan and racial divides. In heavily minority Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant, Dinkins won by margins of 38 to one. Meanwhile, Giuliani carried predominantly white Staten Island's South Shore by twelve to one, Howard Beach and Ozone Park by five to one, and Bensonhurst by eight to one. And, once he took office, Giuliani only seemed to grow more eager to stoke divisions through repeated head-on collisions with icons of the left, welfare-rights organizations, and the ACLU. Indeed, if there is one hallmark of Giuliani's career as a prosecutor and mayor, it is his compulsion to fight without restraint—whether the enemy is the mafia, the education establishment, or his estranged second wife.

Giuliani is now pursuing the same strategy of sowing division, only this time on a national level. To hear him tell it, the election will pit weak-kneed Democrats against hard-line Republicans. "I listen a little to the Democrats, and, if one of them gets elected, we are going on defense," he recently told an audience in New Hampshire. "We will wave the white flag on Iraq. We will cut back on the Patriot Act, electronic surveillance, interrogation, and we will be back to our pre–September 11 attitude of defense."

There is good reason to believe this rhetoric will win over a portion of GOP voters. As Rick Perlstein has pointed out in The New Republic, at a moment when conservatism is philosophically adrift—among other problems, it is currently tethered to an unsuccessful war, one whose premises may not have been all that conservative in the first place—the single thing that truly unites and energizes conservatives is a raw animosity toward liberals. With so many Republican policies having failed over the past six years, contemporary conservatism is less interested in policy and more defined by style. Nothing characterizes that style quite as well as bashing liberals. And Giuliani knows how to bash liberals. Neither McCain nor Romney nor even Newt Gingrich can match Rudy's record in confronting the ideological enemies on conservatism's Most Wanted list. It is in this climate that the tendency to say and do impolitic things—a characteristic that might ordinarily be seen as a drawback for a candidate—has become perhaps Rudy's greatest strength.

When you call Sunny Mindel, longtime Giuliani press aide and confidante, a woman answers the phone and says, "Giuliani Partners." After you ask to speak to Mindel, the woman asks in a slightly suspicious and hostile tone, "Who is trying to reach her?" After you identify yourself, there is a moment of silence. Then, if you pass muster, the woman says, "This is Sunny Mindel."

Mindel is among the old guard of Giuliani's tightly closed group of advisers—loyalists who have stuck with the mayor for years. In addition to Mindel, the group includes inner-circle top dog Tony Carbonetti, who has been with Giuliani since his first, failed campaign against Dinkins in 1989. Carbonetti later became the mayor's chief of staff, and he now works for Giuliani Partners. Another confidante is boyhood friend Peter Powers, who was campaign manager, transition chair, and deputy mayor for Giuliani. Powers now runs Powers Global Strategies, LLC, a lobbying and strategic consulting firm. Among the others closest to Giuliani are former chief mayoral counsel Dennison Young Jr., campaign treasurer John Gross, and former New York Corporation Counsel and co-founder of Giuliani Partners Michael Hess.

If these were Giuliani's only advisers, his campaign would be in trouble. Part of the conventional wisdom that sees Giuliani as an outlier in Republican politics stems from the belief that he is surrounded only by New Yorkers and old friends—people who are themselves outliers in GOP circles. And, before the Giuliani campaign got off the ground, many Republican operatives believed that a major liability for the candidate would be his dependence on this closed circle of parochial advisers, none of whom is experienced in national elections. So it is noteworthy that Giuliani appears not to have fallen into this trap. Early on, Giuliani Partners hired Chris Henick, a Yazoo City, Mississippi–born political operative who trained under Lee Atwater and served as Karl Rove's deputy in Austin during the 2000 campaign—making him a protégé of the two men who, more than anyone else, fathered the GOP's strategy of polarization. Henick has become a bridge between the old guard and the new hires, including campaign manager Michael DuHaime, former political director at the RNC; strategy director Brent Seaborn, a specialist in datamining and microtargeting; senior communications adviser Jim Dyke; and political director Mark Campbell. The presence of Henick—combined with the considerable sums of money flowing out of the Lone Star state and into Giuliani's coffers—suggests that the campaign is being infused with a heavy dose of Texas to balance out its roots in New York.

To be sure, Giuliani's candidacy faces significant pitfalls. To begin with, there is his voluble support for gun control—a dispositive issue for many conservative Republicans. Then, of course, there is the religious right. Though their power is on the wane, Christian conservatives are not going to allow Giuliani to have the nomination without a bitter fight. "Giuliani is the front-runner, but it's kind of like, here in D.C., you drive over the Potomac at night and it looks beautiful, but, if you get down near it, you certainly wouldn't want to take anything out of it and eat it. It's polluted; it's got problems," said Tony Perkins of the Family Research Center. Richard Land, president of the South-

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DINO VOURNAS/AP; THOMAS A. FERRARA/SYGMA/CORBIS; MATTHEW MCDERMOTT/POLARIS

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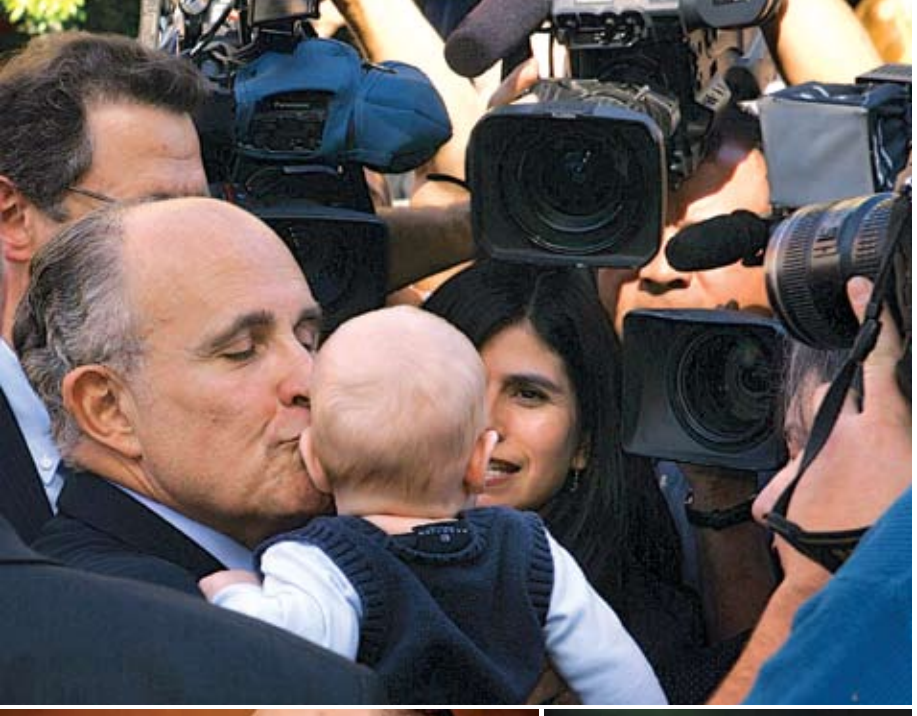

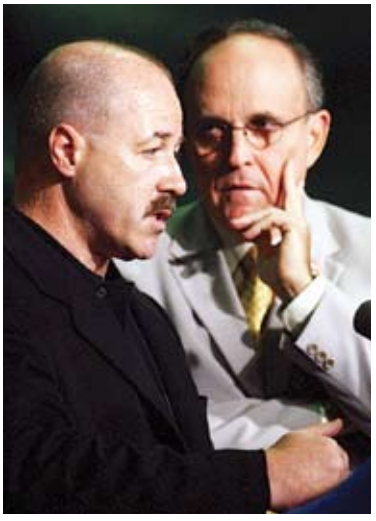

Rudy kisses a baby (top) and his third wife, Judith Nathan (left), but not long-time chum Bernard Kerik (right), the man who could ruin his presidential bid.

ern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, put it this way: "If he wins, he'll do so without social conservatives." Then he added that a Republican presidential candidate can "no more win without conservative voters than a Democrat can without overwhelming support from blacks."

It's not just Giuliani's political positions that offend; his personal life is almost a caricature of family dysfunction. While mayor, Giuliani handled his marital difficulties with public displays that were flamboyantly irresponsible and vindictive. "What kind of man humiliates his children by escalating a private family controversy this way, even leaking—in a bid to gain sympathy—such lurid details as the impotence caused by his prostate treatments? What kind of president would such a man be?" wrote David Freddoso in *National Review Online*. Two months ago, *The New York Times* ran a story titled, "NOTICEABLY ABSENT FROM THE GIULIANI CAMPAIGN: HIS CHILDREN." The article described how, in the wake of his failed second marriage, Rudy's relationship with his son Andrew, now 21, has turned distant, with the two not speaking for over a year. *Gawker* put the matter succinctly: "RUDY GIULIANI EVEN CREEPIER THAN YOU THOUGHT." For a candidate who loves to say that "no government program can replace fatherhood," the hypocrisy is obvious.

Moreover, Giuliani's greatest strength—his ebulliently aggressive persona—can at times become a weakness. Rudy's public behavior as mayor was so egomaniacal as to be incomprehensible outside New York City limits. His firing of William Bratton—probably the best police commissioner the city ever had—appeared to be driven solely by jealousy over Bratton's rising profile. "It was the single biggest mistake of the Giuliani administration," wrote Fred Siegel in his generally sympathetic biography, *The Prince of the City*. In the years since he left Gracie Mansion, Giuliani has continued to feed his appetite for self-aggrandizement. Take his contract for giving speeches at $100,000 or more a pop, which includes the following language: "[T]he private aircraft MUST BE a Gulfstream IV or bigger. … The client agrees to supply two large sedans or SUVs and 1 van for luggage. … Client agrees to provide Mr. Giuliani with a pre-registered, large, two-bedroom, non-smoking suite with a king-sized bed, on an upper floor, with a balcony and a view, if applicable." New Yorkers may love public figures with outsized egos, but, in the rest of the country, such anecdotes are sure to make voters skeptical, at the very least.

Then there are the assortment of embarrassing characters lurking in Giuliani's past. His childhood friend, Alan Placa, is a Catholic priest and accused child molester whom the former mayor has continued to defend. A 2003 grand jury report, in which Placa was referred to as "Priest F," described his alleged crimes: "Priest F was cautious, but relentless in his pursuit of victims. He fondled boys over their clothes, usually in his office. Always, his actions were hidden by a poster, newspaper or a book. He talked continuously as he fondled them. Everyone in the school knew to stay away from Priest F." There is also the notorious Bernard Kerik, New York City's former police commissioner. When Bush tapped Kerik to serve as secretary of homeland security, his nomination foundered thanks to accusations that he employed an illegal immigrant and accepted illegal gifts and loans during his stint as top cop. Kerik owed his entire rise through the ranks to his friendship with Giuliani. And, according to Kerik's former girlfriend, the book publisher Judith Regan, this friendship could come back to haunt Giuliani's campaign. She told one of my TNR colleagues that Kerik and Giuliani would frequently discuss "sketchy" activities in her presence "as if I weren't there." Regan told my colleague that she would reveal the contents of the conversations in the event that Giuliani's presidential campaign took off. (Of course, Regan has her own scandal-ridden past. But she also has enough p.r. acumen and notoriety to win an audience for her accusations.)

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And, yet, despite all his liabilities, Rudy retains a plausible chance of winning the nomination. In some respects, he has simply gotten lucky. He has the good fortune to be running against opponents who cannot lay an undisputed claim to the morality mantle. Romney earned the suspicion of social conservatives when he came out for abortion and gay rights during his 1994 Senate bid and his 2002 Massachusetts gubernatorial campaign. McCain, admitting infidelity, left his first wife, Carol, (who had been severely injured in an auto accident) to marry a much younger heiress to an Arizona liquor fortune. His new wife further complicated his values profile by admitting in 1999 that she had been addicted to Percocet and Vicodin and that she stole these drugs from her own nonprofit medical organization. Moreover, McCain's anti-abortion credentials were tarnished when he spoke out against overturning *Roe* v. *Wade* in 1999, telling CNN, "We all know, and it's obvious, that, if we repeal *Roe* v. *Wade* tomorrow, thousands of young American women would be performing illegal and dangerous operations." McCain has since disowned those comments, but Focus on the Family's James Dobson, for one, does not believe him. "I pray that we won't get stuck with him," Dobson has said.

Giuliani is more than just lucky, however. He is also smart. The former New York mayor has chosen the right moment to take his idiosyncratic brand of conservatism to the national stage. Hawkish on defense, bullish on unrestrained capitalism, socially tolerant on some questions, acidly intolerant on others, despised by his foes, beloved by his allies, eminently comfortable with combative politics, he is plausibly positioned to capitalize on—and perhaps drive—the reconfiguration of the Republican Party. This would have seemed improbable a decade ago, given the substantial differences that separated him from his party's base. But, today, he seems less a misfit in the GOP than a candidate with the potential—if he doesn't short-circuit—to become a transformational figure at a crucial moment in the party's history: someone, like Goldwater, Reagan, or Bush, who could redefine how Republicans win elections and what the label "conservative" means. Perhaps Rusty DePass will name his next dog Giuliani. ◆

The Enterprising American

A Bush policy guru's dicey past.

JAMES KIRCHICK

March 9, 2006, was a bad day for the White House. Weeks before, Claude Allen, the president's chief domestic policy adviser, had resigned, saying that he wanted to spend more time with his family. Then, on March 9, Allen was charged with having stolen some $5,000 worth of merchandise from Washington-area department stores during a months-long shoplifting spree. Even by the standards of a White House already awash in negative publicity, it was an enormous embarrassment.

A few blocks north, at almost exactly the same time, David Gerson, the executive vice president of the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, was dealing with a headache of his own. Staffers at *The American Enterprise*—the think tank's magazine, which was published eight times per year and boasted more than 20,000 subscribers—were threatening revolt against its longtime editor, Karl Zinsmeister. Frustration with Zinsmeister had been building for some time, and, by early 2006, one former staffer recalls, the situation was so bad that "if I got a good offer from McDonald's, I would have taken it." It wasn't just Zinsmeister's direct employees who were disgruntled. In mid-February, one former *American Enterprise* staffer wrote in an e-mail that Veronique Rodman, head of media relations for the think tank, had urged staffers "to mount a 'coup' against Karl within AEI." Magazine employees began meeting with Gerson and airing their grievances. And, on Friday, March 10, one staffer e-mailed co-workers to say that "I'm not feeling a whole lot of motivation to come to the office on Monday." The staffer noted that another employee "feels the same way, and we've even discussed not coming as a show of protest." Six days later, Zinsmeister announced in a mass e-mail that he was "migrating" from his post at the magazine "to a position as a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute." Gerson's headache appeared to be over.

And Zinsmeister's not-so-smooth departure from *The American Enterprise* might have remained a footnote in AEI history—except that, two months later, he was named Claude Allen's successor at the White House.

Zinsmeister got off to a rocky start in his new job—which consists of overseeing the president's domestic agenda on issues ranging from education to immigration and working with Congress to implement it—when, two days after his selection, *The New York Sun* revealed that he had altered a local paper's 2004 profile of him before it was reprinted on his magazine's website. (A quote that had previously denigrated "people in Washington" was changed to instead disparage the country's "overclass.") But he soon apologized for what he called a "foolish" lapse, and—perhaps because the White House isn't exactly the Columbia School of Journalism, or perhaps because Bush officials found the impulse to clean up quotes considerably less creepy than the impulse to rob department stores—Zinsmeister was allowed to keep his post.

Publicly, conservatives praised the appointment. Grover Norquist called him an "intellectual's intellectual," while Zinsmeister's former boss, AEI president Christopher DeMuth, said he was "thrilled" with the White House's decision.

But, privately, many conservatives were stunned—and horrified. "Everyone who knows Karl that I've spoken to reacted with blatant shock," says a former editor at *The American Enterprise*. Another former staffer at the magazine told me that, after Zinsmeister's hiring, "the last vestige of confidence I had in the Bush administration—which wasn't very much—was shot to hell." A prominent neoconservative Washington journalist put it this way: "Everyone thought it was wacky."

Exactly how wacky became clear as I spent more and more time talking to Zinsmeister's former colleagues at AEI. Why, I wanted to know, had they so despised him? And why did he leave *The American Enterprise?*

Zinsmeister—sharp-jawed, tall, now in his late forties—first came to AEI as a research assistant to neoconservative Ben Wattenberg in 1982, shortly after graduating from Yale. He went on to work for Michael Novak as well as for Bill Bennett's Department of Education. He also freelanced as a journalist and radio commentator. All the while, he was honing his political philosophy—a mix of pop-

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ulism, religiously inspired social conservatism, and hatred for coastal elites. In an interview last year with Wattenberg, which aired on PBS, Zinsmeister said that "if I had to put myself in any label, I'd say I'm a militant middle-American advocate."

In 1994, Zinsmeister was named editor-in-chief of *The American Enterprise*, where he quickly got results. With his fiery style and desire to provoke, he changed a dry public-policy magazine into something more readable and less esoteric. "Karl wanted his magazine to be seen not just as … a glorified newsletter for the institute but a serious intellectual publication," says one former AEI employee. The strategy worked. During Zinsmeister's twelve-year tenure, the magazine's subscriber base would increase from fewer than 4,000 to more than 20,000. (Full disclosure: I was an intern at AEI in the summer of 2004, and I later wrote several pieces for the magazine's website. At no point did I have contact with Zinsmeister.)

Among Zinsmeister's personal trademarks was a visceral disdain for Washington, which he avoided at all costs, editing the magazine from his home in Cazenovia, a small town in upstate New York. In an e-mail, he once described himself as "kind of an oddball who doesn't like the Washington whirl," and former employees recall that he frequently referred to D.C. in general and AEI in particular as full of "effete men in suits."

In 2003, Zinsmeister embedded with the 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq. That summer, he published his first book, *Boots on the Ground*, a celebration of the soldiers with whom he had traveled. "One thing I will always admire him for," says Karina Rollins, a former *American Enterprise* editor who now works at the conservative Hudson Institute, "is his courage in going over there and reporting on the courage and sacrifice of the troops." Zinsmeister was a steadfast supporter of the war, and he would become a relentless critic of what he described as the American media's "bias toward failure."

As he spent more and more time on his Iraq projects—which would eventually include a second book, *Dawn Over Baghdad*; a comic book, *Combat Zone*; and a PBS documentary called "Warriors"—Zinsmeister's attention to the magazine began to fade. "Ever since he went to Iraq for the first time, he was out of the office much more than before, and he would be gone on speaking tours without telling us," Rollins recalls. "He was gone often during deadline time, and he would blame deadline problems on us." Soon after his first trip to Iraq, the daily morning conference call that Zinsmeister held with his Washington staff abruptly ceased. Increasingly, Zinsmeister's managerial style veered wildly between two extremes: neglectful and domineering. On the one hand, the magazine often ran long excerpts from books that had been published months earlier. As one current AEI scholar put it, during "the last couple of years he was running the magazine, there were very few original features. It doesn't take much genius to imitate *Reader's Digest*." On the other hand, former editors recall that some authors, including Dr. Laura Schlessinger, rescinded their work after Zinsmeister edited it beyond recognition. "I can't say I know anyone at AEI who was particularly proud of the magazine," says one former colleague. While Zinsmeister had certainly turned *The American Enterprise* from a wonkish journal into a pugnacious voice in the culture wars, a scholar at another conservative think tank says that "the magazine had been floundering under his leadership for many years, that's no doubt."

To be sure, Zinsmeister was hardly the first magazine editor to neglect his publication while writing books. The bigger problem was that he had come to see the magazine as an extension of himself. Zinsmeister, according to a former colleague, looked to another conservative magazine editor, William F. Buckley Jr., as inspiration for marketing himself as an iconoclast. The prolific Buckley had long offered his books as an enticement to potential subscribers. The difference, of course, was that Buckley was a god to conservatives, and there was reason to believe that readers of his magazine might actually *want* his books. The same couldn't exactly be said for Zinsmeister.

Still, he pushed forward. And so it was that AEI began buying Zinsmeister's books to give to new subscribers. The strategy, which debuted in 2003, was to lure people into subscribing through direct mail by offering a free Zinsmeister book with their subscription. At first, these mailings offered multiple options for subscribing, some of which included a Zinsmeister book, some of which did not. The magazine's then-business manager, Garth Cadiz, says that the offers without Zinsmeister's books invariably received better response rates. Yet, in June 2005, Zinsmeister eliminated the option to get a subscription through direct mail without buying one of his books as well. The move was a flop, according to Cadiz. Around that time, subscriptions, which had been climbing for years, began falling. No books by other AEI scholars were ever offered in similar arrangements, Cadiz notes. Zinsmeister also printed ads for his books free of charge in the magazine. In 2004, Zinsmeister wrote an e-mail to his editors concerning *Dawn Over Baghdad*: "I have promised Encounter [his publisher] we will run Dawn ads in TAE for the indefinite future in return for them paying for some of the media interview travel. … So please treat the Dawn ad as a paid ad for the near future (i.e. pull something else, not it, if there is a space crunch)." According to a former AEI employee, it was widely known at the think tank that "Karl was in it for Karl," and his use of the magazine to promote his own books was "sort of like a running joke." The books were shipped to Zinsmeister's home in Cazenovia and mailed to subscribers from there. Over three years, according to an e-mail David Gerson would later send to Zinsmeister after he had announced his plans to step down, AEI purchased 13,700 Zinsmeister books at a cost of $131,000. And what a gift that proved to be for Zinsmeister, as AEI's purchases wound up accounting for 45 percent of the total sales of *Dawn Over Baghdad*'s hardcover edition—and more than half its paperback sales.

It wasn't just the books that irked Zinsmeister's colleagues. There was also his wife, Ann, who was added to the magazine's masthead in early 2003 as its marketing director—a job that Karl described in an e-mail as "part-time." "The role of his wife Ann was never clearly explained to us. … She spent an awful lot of time scheduling radio and TV appearances," says Rollins. According to several former employees of the magazine, Ann did little besides arrange her husband's public appearances and mail his books. Still, she made her presence felt. Ann would occasionally call the D.C. staff to order editorial changes—once, while her husband was away, spending several hours in a dispute with the Washington office over the correct use of apostrophes. "How do you contradict someone sleeping with your boss?" a former editor asked me. Jo Roback-Pal, the magazine's former art director, says that Ann "screamed at me constantly." (Ann did not return a call seeking comment for this article.)

But the biggest grievance harbored by the magazine's staff concerned Zinsmeister himself. "He went to his son's basketball game, and then he would give Jo [Roback-Pal] a hard time about a doctor's appointment," Rollins says. "That happened all the time. If one of these things just happened every now and then you'd write it off. … But there were

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so many of these things and so often." Roback-Pal, who was originally hired to work four days a week, says Zinsmeister demanded that she start working five days—with a small increase in pay—or accept a salary cut to stay at four. She threatened AEI with a lawsuit but eventually settled for a severance package. While Zinsmeister frequently complained about Roback-Pal to other staffers at the magazine—telling Cadiz that she was "useless" and "never there"—her former colleagues say that she never missed a deadline and that he was "abusive" toward her. When she angered him by taking a four-month maternity leave, Zinsmeister told Cadiz, "I am never going to hire another woman because they just get pregnant and leave." For her part, Rollins says that her relationship with Zinsmeister—which she described as "fantastic" during her first two years at the magazine, starting in 2001—eventually soured so badly that he stopped speaking to her for the two months prior to her departure. Another former editor said that "people in the office tried to avoid talking to him." Magazine employees began referring to their think tank with the inverse of its acronym—IEA: the Institute of Evil Administrators—and calling Zinsmeister "Captain Queeg" behind his back.

Former magazine staffers point to "Zinsmeister's Law," which he repeatedly invoked, as the basis for his rudeness. "Remember Zinsmeister's Law: Assume people are stupid," he wrote in one e-mail. His ire wasn't confined to those who worked for him. A former editor at the magazine says Zinsmeister called Gerson a "pinhead," and Cadiz says he referred to AEI's director of human resources as a "boob."

Despite all this—the declining quality of his magazine, his questionable use of subscription sales to promote his own books, his unprofessional treatment of co-workers—Zinsmeister still had one thing going for him: his relationship with AEI President Christopher DeMuth. It was widely known at the think tank that Zinsmeister was a DeMuth favorite; indeed, his officewide nickname was "the golden boy." In 1997, he was given an endowed chair, and, as late as 2002, he was one of the think tank's five highest-paid employees (excluding officers and directors), making $125,000 per year.

Karl Zinsmeister (top) authored a comic book about Iraq before joining Press Secretary Tony Snow (left) and Chief of Staff Josh Bolten (right) in the White House.

But even DeMuth's affection could not protect Zinsmeister from the growing exasperation of his own staff. And so, on March 14—several weeks after his employees had registered their disgust with their boss in discussions with Gerson—Zinsmeister met with Gerson in Washington. Two days after that, Zinsmeister sent out a mass e-mail announcing his resignation but said he would continue editing the magazine while AEI searched for a replacement. Two months later, he had a job in the White House.

Was Zinsmeister fired from *The American Enterprise*? Only he and top AEI officials know for sure. Zinsmeister declined to speak to me, while Gerson told me, in an e-mail, "Any suggestion that he was asked to step down from running the magazine … is completely false." For his part, DeMuth wrote, also in an e-mail, that "Karl was not fired, dismissed, moved aside, or in any way encouraged to step down from the position. The decision was entirely, 100 percent his own. His performance in the position was outstanding and he could have continued in it indefinitely."

But other evidence suggests that the move was not so amicable. "It's sort of a little weird that you announce your departure without naming a successor," a prominent scholar at another conservative think tank says. Indeed, James Glassman—a former TNR publisher who would eventually take over for Zinsmeister—told me that he was not approached by AEI until after Zinsmeister had disclosed his resignation.

Moreover, the day after Zinsmeister announced his plans to resign, Cadiz came to Washington to meet with Gerson. At their meeting, Cadiz says that Gerson discussed Zinsmeister's behavior toward staff and was insistent in his queries about how many books the magazine had ordered, to whom it was shipping them, and how much money was changing hands. He also brought up the subject of potentially "missing" books that Zinsmeister had ordered on behalf of AEI, estimating that as many as 6,000 were unaccounted for. Gerson, says Cadiz, asked him multiple times, "What does Ann Zinsmeister do?" To which Cadiz, long kept in the dark about Ann by her husband, replied, "I don't know." "We have been sending 1.2 million dollars of AEI's money to Cazenovia per year, and we don't know what he's been doing with it," Cadiz recalls Gerson saying. Gerson made clear to him, Cadiz says, that Zinsmeister had been "removed" from the editorship of the magazine. Another former AEI employee recalls that Gerson had

FROM TOP: NO CREDIT; MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVELS; RON EDMONDS/AP

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said a few weeks earlier that Zinsmeister had committed "fireable offenses."

On the morning of April 12, a month after Zinsmeister had announced his resignation and six weeks before the White House announced his appointment, AEI's controller sent an e-mail to Gerson. Zinsmeister was still running the magazine at this point, and she had received a request from him, via Cadiz, to pay for a further 1,000 copies of *Dawn Over Baghdad* at a total cost of $7,500. In an e-mail to Zinsmeister that afternoon, Gerson wrote that "over the past three years, AEI has purchased $131,000 worth of your books (including $12,000 worth of comic books) to use as subscription premiums. … That's been good for St. Martin's and Encounter—assuming a customary commercial arrangement; you've received more than $32,000 in royalties on those purchased." It seems clear from the e-mail that Gerson was annoyed. "We haven't pushed books by other AEI authors in the same way," he continued. "As we change our magazine and its marketing going forward, I want to tip the balance of the book premiums we offer to a more representative cross-section of AEI's products. Charles Murray's *In Our Hands* sold more than 1,600 copies last week alone, and it costs us $3 a copy. Let's try that book as a premium."

Then, on May 24, Zinsmeister sent a triumphant mass e-mail to AEI staff. "I am an admirer of Cincinnatus," he wrote, "and had intended to return quietly to my writer's plow after I completed my last issue of *The American Enterprise*. When I announced my departure, however, I received an unexpected flurry of proposals, one of which I could not ignore. I have been asked by the President to serve as his domestic policy advisor." A well-known scholar at AEI says that many people at the think tank responded with "bemusement. It's not a role we would have seen him as playing." "I personally thought it was very strange," says the head of a prominent conservative organization. "I was completely stunned. … I think people were like, 'What? KZ?'" But, while many conservatives found Zinsmeister to be an odd choice for the job, others thought the appointment made perfect sense. With his disdain for Washington and his hatred for elites, Zinsmeister undoubtedly appealed to "Bush's weakness," speculates one former *American Enterprise* editor, while another laughs at the thought of "two people complaining about elites in D.C., who both went to Yale."

For his part, Cadiz was offered the opportunity to relocate to Washington for the relaunch of the magazine under new leadership. But, with a working wife and two high school–age children in upstate New York, he could not accept. He departed AEI, he says, on agreeable terms. It will no doubt be tempting for AEI to paint Cadiz as a disgruntled employee, but the words of Zinsmeister and Gerson suggest otherwise. In an e-mail Zinsmeister sent just days before assuming his job at the White House, he told Gerson that Cadiz had been "a diligent, error-free, and creative employee for 4½ years, who has saved the magazine a lot of money on various business processes during that time, so I hope *TAE* can be generous with him during this involuntary separation." And, in an e-mail sent to AEI's senior staff the day after Zinsmeister announced his decision to step down, Gerson wrote, "In consideration of Garth's fine work in helping to build the magazine, I committed that AEI will make every effort to treat him well as we sort things out."

In a coup de grâce, Zinsmeister made sure that his last issue of *The American Enterprise* bore his fingerprints. A tribute to Zinsmeister by writer Bill Kauffman, titled "KZ from A to Z," related how Zinsmeister met his wife while on a trip to Tanzania. "Karl, ever unwilling to observe rules and regulations, sneaked out of camp with Ann on a sightseeing lark," Kauffman wrote. But, when he edited the piece, Zinsmeister removed the phrase "ever unwilling to observe rules and regulations." The irony of the change was not lost on Zinsmeister's beleaguered staff, one of whom wrote to his colleagues, "Can't go breaking rules at the WH, now can we?"

But, propensity for rule-breaking aside, one imagines that Zinsmeister has proved a good fit in the Bush White House. After all, like the president he now serves, Zinsmeister long ago mastered the trick of railing against Washington while arrogating to himself as much of the city's power and privilege as he could grab. "People in Washington are morally repugnant, cheating, shifty human beings," Zinsmeister told the *Syracuse New Times* back in August 2004. That quote obviously bothered him, since he would later soften it on his magazine's website. Perhaps it haunted him merely because he worried administration officials would read it as an insult. Or, maybe, just maybe, somewhere in the back of his head, Karl Zinsmeister knew that it described the person he had become. ◆

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The Fixer

Our government doesn't take care of its veterans. Steve Robinson does.

JOSHUA HERSH

Before there was Walter Reed—before the revelations in *The Washington Post*, before the congressional hearings and presidential commissions and resigning generals—there was Joshua Murphy and his bad dream. In November 2005, Murphy returned home to Wichita Falls, Texas, after service that included a year patrolling the treacherous Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City as a specialist in the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment. Prior to the war, he had been outgoing, social, well-liked—"just your basic eighteen-year-old kid," in the words of his mother, Monica. But, after he came home, he started drinking heavily and hardly slept—in no small part because of a recurring nightmare. In it, Murphy, who was a driver in Iraq, was in his Humvee. The Tigris River was on one side of him, a crowd of innocent Iraqi citizens was on the other, and a band of insurgents were right in front of him. His little brother and sister were in the backseat, and Murphy knew he had a terrible decision to make.

A few months after coming home, Murphy was driving down his small town's main street when a police officer signaled for him to pull over. With the flashing lights behind him, his mind raced and he went into a daze. He gripped the steering wheel and kept driving. Finally, a block or so later, he managed to stop the car. He was handcuffed and charged with evading arrest. Murphy's public defender convinced him to plead guilty and take probation with no prison time. But, a few months later, he was arrested again after another incident (those charges are still pending) and, because he was on probation, was sent to jail.

Monica had long been convinced that her son had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an often-debilitating psychological condition that is thought to affect up to a fifth of the 1.5 million troops who have fought in Iraq or Afghanistan. Desperate to find help, she had called his base, Fort Polk in Louisiana, but officials there weren't able to do anything. She contacted a V.A.–run PTSD clinic in Oklahoma City, but its staff couldn't find any record of Murphy even having been in the military. She called her local congressman, the Red Cross, the clinic in Wichita Falls, and the V.A. offices in Fort Worth and Austin. "Nobody wanted to help," she says.

Finally, this February, Monica read an article about the district attorney's office in Norfolk, Massachusetts, which had set up a special program for veterans. The program's director, Kevin Bowe, told her he wasn't sure what he could do for someone 2,000 miles away, but he thought he knew someone who could help: a Washington, D.C.–based veterans' advocate named Steve Robinson. Bowe e-mailed Robinson, who in turn contacted Monica and then made a few phone calls of his own.

Within days, Murphy had an appointment scheduled with a nearby V.A. counselor who—it turned out—made weekly trips to Wichita Falls. And Monica received an e-mail from V.A. Secretary Jim Nicholson's office offering to sort out the problem with Murphy's service records. Although she is still struggling with her son's legal troubles and the V.A.'s bureaucracy, Monica calls Robinson her hero. "He and Kevin Bowe did in less than a week what I have fought to get for nearly two years," she says. Bowe, for his part, says, "She's lucky that I knew Steve."

One morning in late February, Steve Robinson sat in his sparse office in Washington, a few blocks from the White House, checking his voicemail messages. There were going to be a lot of them: The first story about the conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center had come out in *The Washington Post* just two days before, and Robinson was in high demand. He cracked open a tin of Copenhagen snuff and tucked what seemed to be a third of its contents under his lower lip, then scanned his finger down a notepad of to-dos. "Let's see," he said. "So, right now, I've got nine phone calls to make on top of whatever this is." He punched a few buttons on the phone: *You have five new messages. Would you like to hear them?*

Robinson estimates that he gets three or four calls from veterans in need every day, many of them entrenched in what he dubs the neverending "battle of paperwork." Wary of being seen as a caseworker ("I don't do claims!" he insisted at one point), Robinson tends to redirect these veterans to larger organizations like the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. But, every once in a while, a case like Murphy's will catch his eye and he'll devote most of his waking hours to it.

Robinson, who is 44 years old, is a large and imposing presence, built like a formerly muscular man who has lately turned his attention to other things—which is precisely what he is. For two decades, he served in the Army, as an Airborne Ranger out of Bad Tölz, Germany and later as a Ranger instructor in Florida. Most of his duty took place during peacetime, but his unit did conduct operations in the aftermath of the first Gulf war. He still bears a military aspect: a tight, Army-style buzz cut, a handful of tattoos, and, more significantly, scarred lips and a missing half-finger on his right hand from injuries sustained during a munitions training accident in 1989.

Since leaving the military in 2001, Robinson has dedicated his life to the cause of veterans and active-duty soldiers. He has been with a group called Veterans for America for the past year; before that, he spent four years as the executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center. The journalists and congressional aides who keep his number on speed dial know him as the preeminent problem-solver for troubled and abandoned veterans like Joshua Murphy. Among veterans' issues insiders, he is a ubiquitous figure: Rarely, over the past few years, has a major event in the world of veterans' affairs—a journalistic scoop, a military investigation, a new law—transpired without Robinson influencing it in some way. In 2005, after Robinson helped publicize a sharp spike in suicides among active-duty troops, he met with Army officials to discuss how the military was failing its mentally ill. Then he was asked by Senator Barbara Boxer's office to help write legislation that would create a Department of Defense task force on mental health. The following year, Robinson testified before that task force.

As the Walter Reed scandal has made clear, veterans' affairs

Brooks Kraft

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is badly in need of reform. More injured soldiers are coming home than at any time since Vietnam—and with a ratio of wounded-to-killed greater than five times the one from that war. Moreover, they are returning to facilities that, in some cases, haven't been upgraded since the 1970s and that are maintained by a department that is notoriously bad at planning. In 2005, the V.A. had a $1 billion shortfall because it had budgeted using data from 2002—before the war in Iraq had even begun. But the military (and, by extension, the V.A.) is also a uniquely challenging institution to reform. Civilian activists, although ardent, tend to have a hard time effectively penetrating the insular culture of the military, while politicians too often get bogged down in partisan rancor over the war itself. Internal reform is also hard to come by, the military being constitutionally adverse to admissions of weakness or error.

As a former noncommissioned officer, Robinson is uniquely positioned for this task: He has a rare knack for communicating with soldiers and a reputation for rising above ideological divisions. But what makes him truly effective as a fixer—both for individual vets and of institutional defects—is that, in addition to fighting battles for veterans every day, for much of his life he has fought one of his own. The military is in his blood—his father was a heroic Marine pilot who received multiple Purple Hearts in Vietnam—and he considers his time in uniform as some of his best years. Yet, in painful episodes throughout his life, he has come face-to-face with the limits of the military's capacity for empathy and accountability. Robinson's distinctive skill comes from struggling to square his deep love for the military with his frustration over its limitations.

Steve Robinson wipes his eyes at a February press conference on Capitol Hill.

On his first day in Iraq, in September 2003, Georg-Andreas "Andrew" Pogany, a 32-year-old staff sergeant who had been deployed to Samarra with a unit of the Green Berets, came across an unzipped body bag. Inside it, Pogany could see the remains of an Iraqi combatant, shredded beyond recognition as even human. The image stayed with him. All that night, he was haunted by it, and when, the following morning, he could hardly walk from dizziness and nausea, he asked his commander to send him somewhere to get help. "I'm like two seconds away from a nervous breakdown," he told him. Pogany didn't know what psychological services were available to him, so, when his commander refused the request, he replied, "Then I guess you're going to have to send me home."

The Army did send Pogany home, but they also charged him with cowardice for leaving his unit. It was the first charge of the sort since Vietnam. Back in the United States, the press honed in on the story, and Pogany, who was being constantly harassed at his home base in Colorado, had no idea what to do. A reporter covering the story suggested he contact Robinson.

Robinson calls Pogany's story "the reason I am the way I am." At the time, he was doing advocacy work on behalf of Gulf war veterans, and this was the first Iraq or Afghanistan veteran with whom he had worked closely. The experience of this generation of veterans, Robinson would quickly discover, was unusually dire. They were relatively poor and from parts of the country both lacking in strong social services and isolated from the power-brokers and decision-makers in state and federal government. Meanwhile, an internal 2006 V.A. analysis estimated that the fraction of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with mental health disorders could reach as high as 35 percent. Robinson and his numbers guru, a former V.A. official named Paul Sullivan, attribute this to the fact that soldiers patrol urban environments that lack safe areas and to repeat and extended tours, neither of which were common during Vietnam.

The Army's treatment of Pogany struck Robinson as deeply unfair. It reminded him of a scene from the movie *Patton*, in which the general, while visiting a hospital for wounded troops, encounters one who is suffering from shell shock and slaps him for showing weakness. "I said to myself, 'My God, that's got to be a mistake,'" he remembers. He picked up the phone and started making calls.

Robinson has been sensitive to veterans with psychological conditions ever since he was a child, when his father, James C. Robinson, came home from Vietnam. Robinson was born in 1962 (he is the second youngest of seven), while James was stationed at Quantico. The family never lived in the same place for more than two years, as James bounced from base to base: Cherry Point, New River, Whiting Field. James, a decorated pilot who flew helicopter rescue missions during the war, returned from his third tour of duty in Vietnam in the early '70s. From that point on, according to Robinson, James disconnected almost completely from family life and became autocratic and inflexible. "He repressed himself and buried himself in religion," says Robinson, who hasn't spoken to his father in years. "It was almost a religious zealotry, which became uncomfortable for the family." Patti Robinson, Steve's wife, says James had a mean streak, too. "The wrath of that Marine, a hardcore Marine, came down upon the kids in that house pretty hard."

Robinson has four older brothers, three of whom served in the military. But it was the example of his closest brother Ken, who was five years older, that Robinson says he followed when he joined the Army as soon as he turned 18. When I suggest to Ken that their father's postwar deterioration might have been an impetus for Robinson's present work, he replies, "Of course it is. It's not kinda sorta maybe. Of course it is."

Robinson still speaks fondly of his years in service—his office is decorated with medals and photographs from that time—and, indeed, he seems for many years to have had a

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charmed career: a rapid ascent through Ranger Battalion; a special detachment with the U.S. Embassy in Bonn, Germany; a prestigious gig teaching survival skills and parachuting to young Rangers back in Florida. But, by the time Robinson returned to the United States from his last overseas posting in 1995, he was starting to feel that his career had derailed ever since his accident six years earlier. For one thing, he had still not fully healed. He was initially well-treated at a civilian hospital in Germany, but his facial wounds required years of grueling reconstructive surgeries.

As he agitated for better care, he found himself being sidetracked professionally. Robinson took an assignment teaching ROTC to students at the University of West Florida, in Pensacola—hardly a promotion for someone with his qualifications. Then, in 1997, he endured a botched operation at a local military hospital—his wounds became infected, and he was left with a gangrenous sore that metastasized into a hole in the side of his face. ("You could put a golf ball through it," Ken Robinson says.) Unable to sue—in the military, medical care is free, but doctors are generally protected from liability for wrongdoing—and unable to get a satisfactory response from his superiors, Robinson, a 16-year veteran and a commanding officer, collected money from friends and family to fly himself to Washington, where he checked into Walter Reed.

While there, Robinson heard about a task force in the Office of the Secretary of Defense that was looking into illnesses among Gulf war veterans. By that time, the term "Gulf war syndrome" had become a catchphrase for a number of conditions that the government, as a matter of policy, considered to be mostly psychosomatic. But the Department of Defense's investigation was uncovering increasing evidence that, in at least one location in Iraq—a depot called Khamisiyah—more than 100,000 troops had been exposed to Saddam Hussein's chemical munitions. Robinson wanted to be a part of this effort, and he applied for a transfer to the Pentagon. Once there, his job was to seek out soldiers who might be suffering from Gulf war syndrome and connect them with V.A. service providers.

But he quickly became frustrated. "I was now working, for the first time in my life, with the civilian leadership in the Pentagon," he says. "And I began to see that some of the policies that they implemented were having an adverse effect on people that were serving in the military." Robinson believed that the Defense Department was hiding crucial information from the public about American soldiers' level of exposure to chemical weapons and not doing enough to help those who had gotten sick from it. "I was reading the raw intelligence," he says. "And I questioned why we were either withholding information or not telling people about things—or correcting problems—because that's what I thought we were there to do."

In 2001, disillusioned by the lack of progress at the Department of Defense, Robinson retired from the military and, a few months later, took the job at the National Gulf War Resource Center outside Washington. Not long after leaving the Pentagon, Robinson applied for his retirement benefits. "I didn't want to utilize my position to speed things through or raise hell, so I just waited," he explains. "It took two and a half years." At one point during the wait, Robinson was speaking before a congressional panel on veterans' issues, and he said, "I testify before Congress, I track all these issues, and if I can't get in, if my profile doesn't cause you to expedite my claims, then what happens to all these other guys and girls?"

Robinson took his outrage with him into his advocacy work, although it didn't initially serve him so well. He quickly developed a reputation for being hard-nosed and passionate, sometimes to a fault. James H. Binns Jr., a Vietnam veteran who leads a V.A. advisory committee on Gulf war illnesses on which Robinson served, says, "I remember at one of our first committee meetings, he got into a very emotional criticism of one of the Department of Defense people that was there because he had worked with this person previously and was offended by what he had done. … He came across as kind of a hot-headed veteran who cared deeply about something but was seen more for his emotion than for his knowledge and facts."

By the time Robinson heard from Andrew Pogany, he was, he says, starting to "understand how Washington, D.C., works." More experienced advocates and policy wonks in the capital took him aside and told him that his anger, while impressive, was counterproductive. One of those mentors, a government official who is still friends with Robinson, says that young advocates often have "a lot of piss and vinegar, and they've got to get it out. So Steve had to get through that and realize that his viewpoints were going to be listened to." Robinson also began to focus more on his argument than his emotions. "I changed my tactics," Robinson says. "Instead of expressing my righteous indignation and creating enemies, what I learned to do was to beat people up with facts."

As Pogany's case began to receive attention from the press, Robinson took this lesson to heart. He stayed largely out of the limelight but spoke with Pogany constantly, offering advice on how to cope with the hectoring at the base and how to deal with the press. He stayed up late researching Army regulations and forwarding helpful passages to Pogany. Pogany suspected that his panic attack might have been linked to an antimalarial drug called Lariam that he had taken shortly before deploying. Robinson told Pogany about other cases of bad reac-

Specialist Jeremy Duncan testifies before Congress in March on conditions at Walter Reed.

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

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tions to Lariam, and he helped Pogany and his lawyer construct a case against the drug. Over the next few months, with Robinson's guidance, the press shifted its interest in Pogany's story to the military's use of Lariam, and the Army, while admitting no error, quietly withdrew its charges.

Around the same time, Robinson got another chance to put his more tactful approach to work. In October 2003, he got a call from a UPI reporter named Mark Benjamin, who told him that he had been hearing rumors about problems with the medical care at Fort Stewart, in Georgia. Two days later, Robinson showed up at the front gate of Fort Stewart with Benjamin, flashed his retired-military ID card, and drove onto the base.

Fort Stewart, situated in a small, rundown town lined with strip malls and gun stores, is the permanent home to the 3rd Infantry Division, the massive Army unit that spearheaded the U.S. military's decisive charge into Baghdad in April 2003. By the fall of that year, more than 600 National Guardsmen and Reservists were in Stewart's medical wards. In some cases, the medical barracks were makeshift facilities that had no hot water, no electricity, no air conditioning, and shared bathrooms. "There were people with bandaged wounds, there were people on crutches, there were people with mental problems, females that were pregnant," Robinson recalls. "It just looked like a really bad place to put people when they're trying to heal." Meanwhile, Benjamin and Robinson discovered that many soldiers couldn't even visit a doctor—according to one document Benjamin acquired, there were no appointments available for almost a month.

Back in Washington, Robinson started looking for an inside government contact. He cold-called Jim Pitchford, a military aide to Republican Senator Kit Bond and a former Marine, and invited him to visit the base. Shortly after Benjamin's UPI wire story, "Sick, Wounded U.S. Troops Held In Squalor," appeared, Pitchford and Robinson returned to Fort Stewart, this time accompanied by a stern-looking brigadier general assigned to keep an eye on them. "This is how I get to know Steve," Pitchford told me recently. "We've got this hardened warrior sitting across from us, and you can tell from his body language that it's probably the worst thing that's ever happened to him: He's got a Senate staffer and a veterans' advocate on the same day, and he's got to babysit us." Pitchford laughed. "So Steve says to him—and I'll never forget this—'Listen, all I'm asking you to do is come with us and talk to some soldiers with us. I want you to see what I see and hear what I'm hearing.'" Together, the three of them walked over to the barracks full of injured troops, and Robinson started chatting. By the end of the day, Pitchford said, the general's tone had changed completely. "He said, 'You're right, we *have* let these soldiers down, and we're going to fix this.' And I'll never forget it. His arms weren't closed at the end of the day."

A couple days later, Bond and his Democratic counterpart on the Senate National Guard Caucus, Patrick Leahy, issued a report condemning the "totally inappropriate" care at Fort Stewart. They credited the uncovering of the problems to "a reporter and expeditious follow-up by a veteran service organization representative." In addition to the degrading living conditions, the report noted that, in some cases, maimed soldiers were supervising other maimed soldiers—"the sick and injured leading the sick and injured." Pitchford said, "If you read that report, it's writing about things that happened again at Walter Reed. You want to say, 'Who was paying attention?' Nobody was."

The articles about Walter Reed in *The Washington Post*, the first of which came out on February 18, described moldy, dilapidated living quarters, soldiers with head wounds being cared for by others with psychological conditions, and hundreds stuck in a bureaucratic purgatory. They surprised politicians, senior military officials, and the American public, but not Robinson. In December 2003, he had returned to Walter Reed to have a kidney stone removed. After his discharge, he started regularly visiting the hospital on weekends. He would bring his two bulldogs, Bluto and Cri Cri, and wander around the grounds, introducing himself to the veterans and offering to assist them. Sometimes, Robinson and his wife would round up a few of the guys and take them on daytrips in his Ford F-250 out to the mountains in Virginia. They all had PTSD, and were easily shaken in public, even by something as simple as the sound of children playing.

Robinson witnessed troubling activity at Walter Reed: soldiers sharing drugs, self-medicating with alcohol, wasting away alone without family or treatment. But, one morning in early 2004, he got an up-close look at the insidious way some superiors were treating veterans there. One of the soldiers who often came on the trips to the country was a baby-faced 34-year-old Army Reserve lieutenant named J. Philip Goodrum. Goodrum, who suffers from PTSD (the smell of diesel fuel can cause him to have a panic attack), was entrenched in a messy legal and bureaucratic struggle with the military over his benefits and a bogus charge that he had gone AWOL when he sought mental care from a civilian clinic. He was walking with Robinson across the Walter Reed campus to a meeting about his upcoming Article 15, an Army disciplinary proceeding. They passed by a colonel, one of the commanders of Walter Reed's medical hold unit, and Goodrum, who was carrying reams of files, nodded to her and said, "Good morning, ma'am." According to Robinson, the colonel "stopped in her tracks, came back, and got in his face and said 'When you see an officer, you salute.' So he took all his paperwork and just dropped it—prrrut!—on the ground and saluted her. And he just stood there and wouldn't move."

Kenneth Sargent, who suffered a brain injury in Iraq, meets with his wife Tonia. Kevin C. Kiley (right), then–Walter Reed commander, waits to testify before Congress in March.

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Later that day, still fuming over the incident, Robinson headed to the main offices looking for Kevin C. Kiley, the commander of Walter Reed. Kiley happened to be standing in the front of the office, talking to his secretary, so Robinson walked up and introduced himself. He told him about what just happened to Goodrum and also mentioned his concerns about substance abuse in the barracks. Kiley directed Robinson to tell the story to his sergeant major, which he did. (An Army spokesperson says that Kiley is "not currently engaging media"; he has previously said he does not remember speaking with Robinson.) No one at Walter Reed ever got back to him.

Although he had many successes in the first years of the war, including Pogany and the soldiers at Walter Reed who credited those trips to the Virginia mountains with saving their lives, Robinson was still feeling unsatisfied. In early 2005, he helped Benjamin, now at *Salon*, produce a long story about Walter Reed, but it went largely unheeded. That same year, the number of suicides among soldiers in Iraq doubled. Robinson was plagued by a pervasive sense that he couldn't do enough, and he was starting to think that the Resource Center was not providing him with sufficient staff and money to take care of the new flood of veterans he was encountering.

Two years ago, he quit advocacy entirely and moved to Beverly Hills, intending, for all he knew, to never come back. His brother Ken was developing a TV show for NBC called "E-Ring" about the Pentagon's special operations command and had invited him to work on the program. But, after only 14 episodes, the show was canceled, and Robinson moved to Florida and took a job as a manager at a temporary staffing agency. His wife, Patti, stayed in Arlington, Virginia, with their cat and two dogs and talked to Robinson every day. Patti remembers those few months well: "I think Steve needed a break."

But Robinson was miserable. And, anyway, he hadn't exactly succeeded in escaping from the veterans' world. Reporters still called him constantly for quotes. Plus, many of his employees were themselves Iraq veterans, some homeless or drug users, and he found himself directing them to the local V.A. or arranging services for them. Four months after he arrived in Florida, he had enough. "I just called Patti up one night, and I said, 'I'm coming home,'" he says. Robinson accepted a job with Veterans for America and moved back to Washington. "I wanted to get back into the game," he says.

Recently, the game has started to change. Although Robinson was not directly involved in *The Washington Post* series, once it came out, he felt, for the first time in a long while, like he had momentum on his side. Less than a week into the scandal, William Winkenwerder, the assistant secretary of defense who oversaw health policy, resigned. (Robinson calls him "my principal nemesis for the past six years"; the Army has said his departure was planned prior to the *Post*'s revelations.) Then, after days of denials by top Army officials that they had any idea how bad things had gotten at Walter Reed, reports of Kiley's 2004 meeting with Robinson showed up in the press. On March 1, Major General George W. Weightman, the commander of Walter Reed, was fired by Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey. The next day, Harvey himself stepped down under pressure from Defense Secretary Robert Gates. He was followed nine days later by Kiley. By the end of the first week of March, House and Senate committees had held preliminary hearings on living conditions at Walter Reed, President Bush appointed a bipartisan commission to conduct a systemwide review of military health care, and the V.A. and the Pentagon initiated their own investigations. (Robinson testified before a House Veterans Affairs subcommittee on March 13.)

But these victories haven't taken the pressure off Robinson. If anything, they've increased it. In early March, I joined Robinson in New York for a taping of an episode of the "Montel Williams Show" about veterans' care. He arrived at the studio almost two hours early. It's rare to find Robinson in a situation he has not carefully orchestrated, but the previous week had been so hectic that when he sat down on a couch in his green room, he seemed disoriented and exhausted.

"Here's what living in my world is like," he said finally. "This guy calls, he needs help, and he feels like he's going to kill himself." He picked up a napkin off a table and placed it on his right shoulder. "Put this right here. Then a father calls and says, 'My son's got PTSD, and the V.A. says it won't help'"—placing another napkin on his left shoulder—"well, take care of that. And, before you know it, I've got a rucksack full of shit, of people that are depending on me to do something."

Robinson had recently started talking about leaving Washington again, this time to work at a nonprofit in Colorado that helps veterans transition to civilian life. "My whole job is about battles of inches," Robinson explained to me once. "But I like helping people recover from their wartime experiences. And that to me seems like it's going to be much more fun and much more tangible than the battle of inches."

Robinson's mood improved when he realized that he knew some of the other panelists on the show. Out in the hallway, he came upon Kenneth Sargent, a diminutive 38-year-old whose recovery from a brain injury he suffered in Najaf, in 2004, had recently been featured in *Newsweek*. Sargent looked up and grinned. "Oh, this is going to be fun," Robinson said, almost giddily. "Hey, buddy!" For the next 20 minutes, he roamed from green room to green room, visiting the other guests. He sat with Stefanie Pelkey, a former Army captain whose husband, Michael, had shot himself in the chest a year and a half after returning from Iraq, and then he stopped in on a young soldier whom he had met a few years ago, while the soldier was recuperating at Walter Reed.

Back in his own green room, waiting for the taping to begin, a steely poise settled over Robinson. There were still a lot of things to do before he could seriously consider leaving for Colorado—there were congressional hearings to testify before, a presidential commission to guide. And, more pressingly, down the hall, there were veterans he cared about and who needed his help. "I just want to see this through," he said.

Robinson's resolve reminded me of something he said the first time we met. He had been telling me about one of the Walter Reed veterans he had gotten to know on those trips to the mountains. The story seemed to become deeply personal to him, and, at one point, he cut himself off. "These troops believed the hype, just like I did, when they came into the military," he said. "I believed that my life had value and that the government and the nation would do everything they could do to help me and my friends in the event anything happened to us. … The reality was that I would come back, and these soldiers would come back, to a system that doesn't treat them. I think we need to treat these guys almost like parents would—that's the level of love and care and concern." ◆

Joshua Hersh is on the editorial staff of The New Yorker.

LAURA EMBRY (TOP); BILL PUTNAM, BOTH ZUMA PRESS/NEWSCOM

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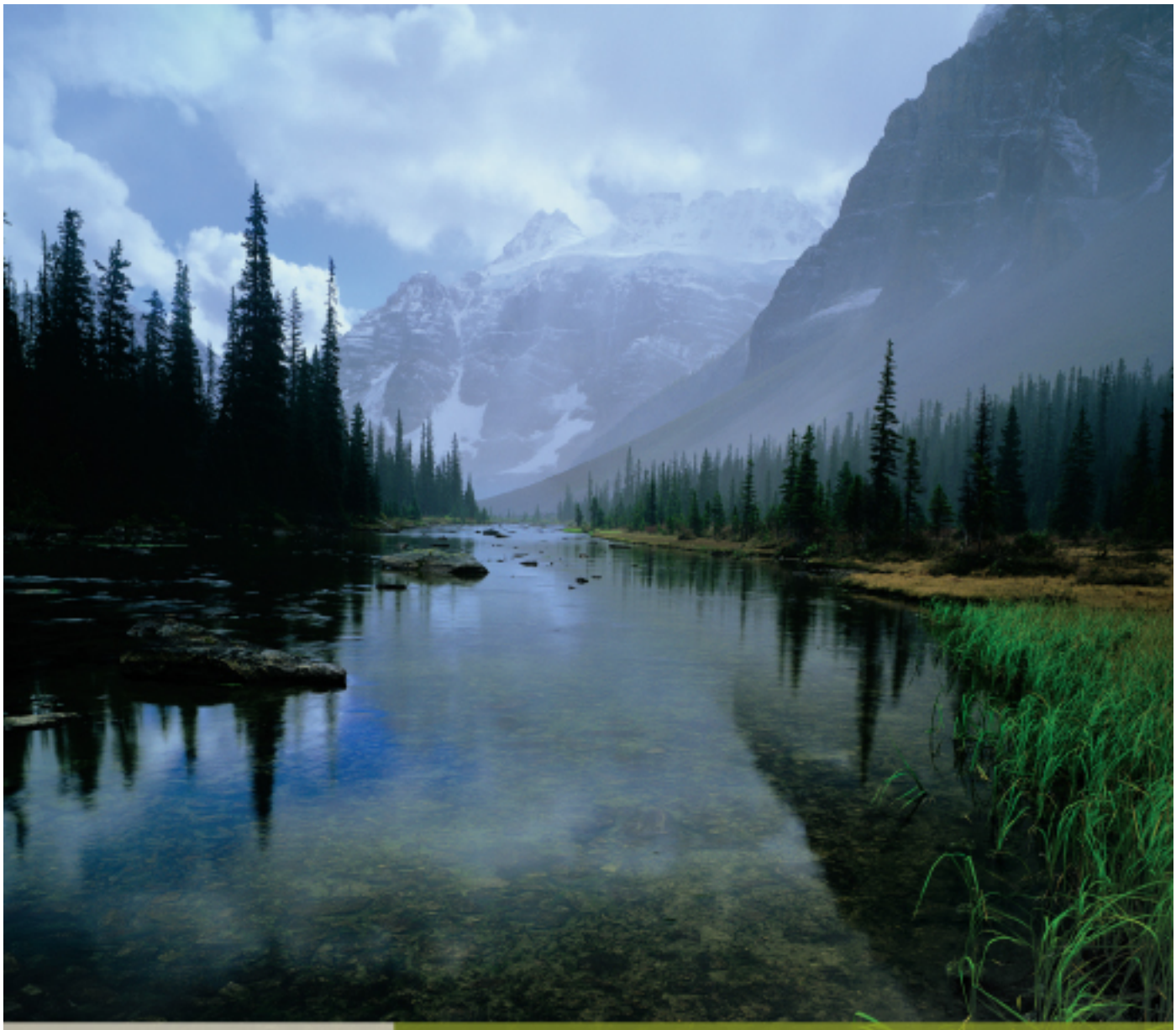

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

PEOPLE IN SHADOWS

What a treat it is to watch Sarah Polley's career flourish. First, her acting. A few months ago she was in *The Secret Life of Words*, where she created a young woman stilled by gross experience. Now, after directing several shorts, Polley has directed her first feature, *Away From Her* (in which she does not appear). More: the screenplay is her own adaptation of a story by Alice Munro. *Away From Her* is extraordinary—delicate, seriously disturbing, and lovely.

Polley, born in 1979, is a Canadian who studied acting in London (with Albert Finney, no less), then came home and began working, particularly for Atom Egoyan in two films, one of them the memorable *The Sweet Hereafter*. (Egoyan is an executive producer on this new film.) She soon began making shorts. Then she discovered the Munro story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," was enraptured, and was at last enabled to make a film of it. Appropriately, the story has just been reprinted on its own, using the film's title. In Polley's preface, she writes that after first reading the story, "I returned to it many times in the following months, trying to make sense of the hold it had over me." By whatever means, family experience among them, she has found the answer and has realized it exquisitely on film.

Munro's story is about one of the dangers of living. We are all open to attack by physical mysteries that we do nothing to invite and can do nothing to avoid. Alzheimer's is prime: nothing need be done to incur it, little can be done to repel it. It is like a large soft cloud that floats up unbidden and gradually envelops. For a time, perhaps a long time, it doesn't even frighten the individual. The magnificent simplicity of Munro's story is that she tells it without a sob, simply as the arrival of something in a woman who is unaware of it for a while and therefore unafraid. Her loving husband can see quite clearly what is happening and must eventually—in a sense helplessly—take necessary steps. Munro relates all this in prose that is so unadorned as to be beautiful, so unmaneuvering that it grips, so direct that it is wise. (Quite rightly, the screenplay relies a good deal on Munro's dialogue.)

TOMASZ WALENTA

AWAY FROM HER
Lionsgate

FRACTURE
New Line

Grant, a retired professor, and Fiona, his wife, have lived happily in a Canadian university town for many years. Grant has had some encounters with female students, but they have not rippled the peace of his marriage. Suddenly Fiona, an unfussily competent woman, begins to leave strange little reminder notes to herself around the house, and some small oddities in her behavior begin. "I don't think it's anything to worry about," she says, "I expect I'm just losing my mind." An offhand, household witticism.

Inevitably, matters lead in the course of months to the nursing home, very clubby on the first floor. The second floor is for patients who are—in that weird term—advanced. The superintendent, Madeleine, a woman whose charm seems to be freshly ironed every morning, informs Grant that he will not be allowed to visit for the first thirty days. His objections do not prevail, and at the end of the month he is surprised, even dismayed, to find that Fiona has settled in chummily and is glad, though not relieved, to see him.

In the nursing home Fiona has become particular chums with Aubrey, a man whom she thinks she knew before. Aubrey weeps and trembles when she leaves him to be with Grant on his visits. Madeleine tells Grant that attachments like Aubrey and Fiona's are common but have no serious import. Grant goes to visit Aubrey's wife, Marian, with a suggestion that would at least interrupt the hospital friendship. Marian is not interested. Still, Polley's only alteration in Munro is to fulfill something that is merely foretold in the story.

The air of the film, almost the literal atmosphere through which everything moves, is made for us by the two principal actors. Julie Christie, the Golden Girl of British film in the 1960s, has of late done some intelligent acting. She was the Queen in Branagh's *Hamlet*, and she was notable in a minor role in *The Secret Life of Words*. Polley has said that thinking about Christie and at last getting her agreement to play Fiona were crucial to the film. Christie's Fiona is a small paradox. It is not, in itself, exceptional acting. Emma Thompson, for instance, if she could have managed to age a bit for the role, would exceed Christie in art. But Christie's sheer understanding of the woman brings her into haunting life.

Gordon Pinsent, the mature Canadian actor who plays Grant, was, I'm truly sorry to say, unknown to me despite his extensive career in the theater and on screens large and small, mostly in his own country. He is one of those immediately embraceable actors who can think, who can make inner action as clear as anything he says or does. Through all the

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difficulties of color and intent in his role, Pinsent is like an exceptionally strong man handling weights, with both consideration and ease.

But these two actors and everyone concerned with *Away From Her* owe the chance to spend their abilities on this extraordinary film, as no doubt they would agree, to the passion of Sarah Polley for the project and to the talent with which she has realized it. Her directing flows and interweaves; and she has an enlarging quality of reticence, which makes key moments strong by not exploiting them. But her master touch is in evolving the chill, even on the sunniest days, that is enveloping Grant as he watches the cloud approach and Fiona equanimously welcoming it. Oh, how I hope there will soon be another film directed or acted by Polley.

Fracture is a thriller that pits two quite different men against each other, a mature, sophisticated middle-aged murderer and a gum-chewing, avidly informal young assistant D.A. But there's another confrontation, more subtle, a contrast between two kinds of acting. The older man is played by Anthony Hopkins, a technically immaculate veteran of theater and film; the younger man is played by Ryan Gosling, whose idea of acting is to make sure that we can't accuse him of it. Thus in this contrast there is some extra amusement and interest in the scenes between the two.

The film was directed by the slick Gregory Hoblit and was written by Daniel Pyne and Glenn Gers. The Pyne-Gers approach to screenwriting is to amass clever twists, each one designed to jar us out of whatever expectation the last twist may have suggested. For instance (these matters come early in the film) Hopkins shoots his wife because she has been seeing a younger man, and he devises the killing so that, though he is clearly the shooter, he cannot be convicted. Next, the detective assigned to solve the case is his dead wife's former lover. And that's just the beginning.

The chief pleasure in the picture (set in Los Angeles) is in watching Hopkins spin off another of his nutty self-possessed intellectual criminals—this time it's Hannibal Lecter lite. And there are some shiny modern settings by Paul Eads. And a professional curiosity: Fiona Shaw, a pre-eminent English actress on both sides of the Atlantic (she was Medea in London and New York), was brought over to play the trifling role of a judge. We can all hope that Shaw enjoyed her visit to L.A.

On that eleventh of September, while I watched from my apartment the black smoke billowing out of the World Trade Center, I soon began to sense, under the shock, a wormy wriggle of obscenity. It felt sickening that this catastrophe was reminding me of horror movies. Within hours, days, weeks, I learned that the rest of the world in great degree shared that feeling. By what right under the wide heavens had such a monstrosity to summon up memories of trash?

The Virginia Tech agony is, in relation to film, at least as tackily suggestive and much more tightly knit. Seung-Hui Cho was not only committing acts that, like those of bin Laden's assassins, resembled a film; he was actually in a film. The written materials that he would leave were close to mere formalities. Apparently he had to be in a movie, like dozens he had seen, spouting his hate and his canted reasons; but even more importantly, we can think, he needed to be the star that his largely self-constricted life had not permitted him to be. After he killed his first two victims and was launched on his ecstasy, he went back to his room and got the video that he then sent to NBC to make sure he would not die—before he went on to slaughter thirty more people and himself. He was certifying his film, supplying the reality that would immortalize him. Imagine it. Every moment while he was doing those killings, the existence of that film was in his head.

Others have pointed out the similarities between Cho's tape and some moments in horror films. But those twenty-seven students and five teachers were slaughtered, one might say, so that Cho, having made his film, could fulfill it. Cho's shootings seemed to be—for him—the validating of his film.

In any case, two of the most harrowing massacres in American history are linked to film, the first peripherally, the second organically. The blessings of film are innumerable, but, as with most blessings, curses linger nearby. ◆

James Wood
GETTING TO THE END

THE ROAD
By Cormac McCarthy
(Alfred A. Knopf, 241 pp., $24)

I.

In addition to the 9/11 novel, and the 9/11 novel that is pretending not to be a 9/11 novel, an old genre has been re-awakened by new fears: the post-apocalyptic novel (which may well be, in fact, the 9/11 novel pretending not to be one). The possibility that familiar, habitual existence might be so disrupted within the next hundred years that crops will fail, warm places will turn into deserts, and species will become extinct—that areas of the earth may become uninhabitable—holds and horrifies the contemporary imagination. This fear may not be as present, acute, or knife-edged as the fear of nuclear annihilation that produced novels such as *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and *On the Beach* and movies such as *Fail Safe* and *The Day After*, but it is more fatalistic and in its way more horrible, precisely because the catastrophe that climate change imagines may be inevitable and incorrigible. And the temporal reprieve, the deferral of the worst to later generations, may not be any consolation at all. It may actually increase the fear: are you more agonizingly afraid of something that will happen to yourself or of something that will happen to your children?

This—the increasingly well-founded horror that precedes all the "greening" that is around us now—may in part explain the recent cluster of new movies and novels that are set in a future world catastrophically changed or almost posthuman: *Children of Men*, and the global warming horror movie *The Day After Tomorrow*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's novel about cloning, *Never Let Me Go*, and Jim Crace's new novel *The Pesthouse*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. In a recent book called *The Revenge of Gaia*, the scientist James Lovelock presents this hideous picture of the warmed world, sometime in the middle of this century:

> Meanwhile in the hot arid world survivors gather for the journey to the new Arctic centers of civilization; I see them, in the desert as the dawn breaks and the sun throws its piercing gaze across the horizon at the camp. The cool fresh night air lingers for a while and then, like smoke, dissipates as the heat takes charge. Their camel wakes, blinks and slowly rises on her haunches. The few

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remaining members of the tribe mount. She belches, and sets off on the long unbearably hot journey to the next oasis.

Note the word "survivors": post-apocalyptic minimalism is assumed. Lovelock would be a better writer if he were a bit more minimalist in style. Minimalism can be very good, certainly, for the life of fiction: description, thrown back onto its essentials, flourishes as it justifies its own existence. Words are returned to their original function as names. The J. M. Coetzee who admires the way that Daniel Defoe has the shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe notice "two shoes, not fellows" on the island shore, as proofs of other deaths, is the same novelist who, in *The Life & Times of Michael K.*, thrillingly described, from the ground up as it were, Michael K.'s desperate, starving, solitary roaming through the dry wastes of rural South Africa. How will Michael K. find his next meal? Where will he sleep? Prison fiction works in the same way. One day of Ivan Denisovich's life will suffice for the telling, not just because Ivan's every day is the same, but because the fiction has slowed down to notice the smallest details, just as time has slowed down for Ivan. Inside prison, the scale of everything has changed: a decent piece of bread would be an unimaginable luxury for Ivan, and worth the lengthiest savoring.

In some ways, and despite Cormac McCarthy's reputation as an ornate stylist, *The Road* represents both the logical terminus, and a kind of ultimate triumph, of the American minimalism that became well-known in the 1980s under the banner of "dirty realism." This was a prose of short declarative sentences, in which verbs docked quickly at their objects, adjectives and adverbs were turned away, parentheses and sub-clauses were shunned. An anti-sentimentality, learned mainly from Hemingway, was so pronounced as to constitute a kind of male sentimentality of reticence. Basic, often domestic activities were honored in sentences of almost painfully repetitive simplicity. A generic parody might sound like this: "He took the glass from the cupboard and set it on the table. He poured the bourbon into it, but did not drink it. Instead, he went to the door and listened. Nothing except far away a squeal of tires, over on Route 9 probably. He walked back heavily to the table. Through the wall he could hear the couple arguing again."

This style, which quickly reaches the limits of its expressivity, produced one indisputably significant writer, Raymond Carver, and a thousand thin cousins. Two years ago, it was born again in Cormac McCarthy's cynical, very bloody, very stripped-down thriller *No Country for Old Men*, which abounded in lucid, hard little paragraphs devoted to male activity—a man painstakingly dressing a wound or slowly cleaning his gun or chasing another man down a street. That book was slick and merely cinematic, but in *The Road* the same kind of minimalism comes alive. Dirty realism was sometimes unwittingly excruciating because one felt that the chosen fictional worlds—even impoverished ones, all those motels and trailers—deserved richer prose. But in *The Road* this dumbly questing, glacially heuristic approach matches its subject, a world in which nothing is left standing.

Roughly ten years before the opening of the action of the novel, some kind of climacteric occurred: "The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions." A kind of nuclear winter now grips an America—and presumably a world—that is largely unpeopled. Animals have disappeared, there are no birds, no cities—just burned-out buildings—no cars, no power, nothing. Corpses are everywhere. Black ash covers everything, and the weather is always gray: "By day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp." A father and a son, who remain unnamed, are making their way southward, in America, toward the sea, in the hope that they might find human community or just some activity on the coast. We learn that the son was born ten years ago, and that the boy's mother committed suicide rather than wander the world as a survivor. So the boy has never known anything else. The father has his memories of ordinary life before the catastrophe, but these are horridly incommunicable, and McCarthy beautifully catches the alienation between the two generations: "He could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well and he thought perhaps the child had known this better than he."

Short phrasal sentences, often just fragments, savagely paint the elements of this voided world. Food and survival are the only concerns. With no animals alive, the best chance is to come upon some old cache of canned food in an abandoned house or farm: "Mostly he worried about their shoes. That and food. Always food. In an old batboard smokehouse they found a ham gambreled up in a high corner. It looked like something fetched from a tomb, so dried and drawn. He cut into it with his knife." McCarthy is not without a sense of the comic, and he knows how to keep his punch lines dry until the last moment. The pair rake through an old supermarket, for instance, and eventually come upon an unopened can of Coke. The boy does not know what this is; his father promises him it will be a treat:

> On the outskirts of the city they came to a supermarket. A few old cars in the trashstrewn parking lot. They left the cart in the lot and walked the littered aisles. In the produce section in the bottom of the bins they found a few ancient runner beans and what looked to have once been apricots, long dried to wrinkled effigies of themselves. The boy followed behind. They pushed out through the rear door. In the alleyway behind the store a few shopping carts, all badly rusted. They went back through the store again looking for another cart but there were none. By the door were two softdrink machines that had been tilted over into the floor and opened with a prybar. Coins everywhere in the ash. He sat and ran his hand around in the works of the gutted machines and in the second one it closed over a cold metal cylinder. He withdrew his hand slowly and sat looking at a Coca Cola.
>
> What is it, Papa?
>
> It's a treat. For you.
>
> What is it?

The Road is a much more compelling and demanding book than its predecessor, which had the marks of a book designed to be read quickly. The new novel will not let the reader go, and will horribly invade his dreams, too. The apocalyptic-fiction genre is not a very distinguished one. It relies on formulaic scenery (those piles of burning tires always seen in films, those gangs of feral children), and generally on a rather lazy or incoherent political futurism. (If Britain, in *Children of Men*, twenty years hence, is ruled by a totalitarian dictator who can round up immigrants and put them in cages, why can't this same all-powerful ruler clean up the garbage?) It is an interesting question as to why McCarthy succeeds so well. The secret, I think, is that McCarthy takes nothing for granted.

It is the common weakness of novels such as Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, P. D. James's *Children of Men*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, or even Anthony Burgess's *A Clock-*

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work Orange and Orwell's *1984*, that they are all to some extent science-fiction allegories in which the author extrapolates from the present, using hypothetical developments in the future to comment on crises that he or she sees as already imminent in his or her own time. Thus, in the post-nuclear age of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, secularism will triumph and religions will die; in Lessing's and Burgess's worlds, juvenile violence and waywardness have spun out of control (these two novels were written in 1961 and 1974, in the two decades of "The Sixties"); in James's Britain of twenty years hence, males have become infertile and immigrants are rounded up by a totalitarian government and put in cages. There is nothing wrong with any of this, except that some essential illusionistic pressure is taken off the novelist, who can then merely describe the life that we know but with a twist, the old world that most of us recognize but that is suddenly more horrid to live in.

McCarthy's vision is nothing like this. *The Road* is not a science fiction, not an allegory, and not a critique of the way we live now, or of the-way-we-might-live-if-we-keep-on-living-the-way-we-live-now. It poses a simpler question, more taxing for the imagination and far closer to the primary business of fiction-making: what would this world without people look like, feel like? From this, everything else flows. What would be the depth of one's loneliness? What kind of tattered theology would remain? What would hour-to-hour, day-to-day experience be like? How would one eat, or find shoes? These questions McCarthy answers magnificently, with the exception of the theological issue (about which more in a moment).

McCarthy's devotion to detail, his Conradian fondness for calmly described horrors, his tolling fatal sentences, make the reader shiver with fear and recognition. The Coke can is a good example: McCarthy is not afraid to stint the banal, and we are always aware of the contemporary American civilization that has been overthrown by events; it pokes up out of the landscape like fingerposts. There is a barn in a field "with an advertisement in faded ten-foot letters across the roofslope. See Rock City." (So we are in Tennessee, the scene of many of McCarthy's novels.) There are old supermarkets, and abandoned cars, and guns, and a truck the father and son sleep a night in, and even a dead locomotive in a forest. The narrative is about last-ditch practicality, and is itself intensely practical. In one of the houses they enter, the father goes upstairs, looking for anything useful. A mummified corpse is lying in a bed, a blanket pulled up to its chin. Without sensitivity, the man rips the blanket from the bed and thieves it. Blankets matter. There is even a light meter, and the way McCarthy deals with this gives an idea of his patience with *things*. The man is reflecting on how monotonous the diurnal thin gray light has become:

> He'd once found a lightmeter in a camera store that he thought he might use to average out readings for a few months and he carried it around with him for a long time thinking he might find some batteries for it but he never did.

Again there is the slightly droll humor—the non-existent batteries kept for the punch line. This sort of ordinariness anchors the book. Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, by contrast, is finely written but afraid of proper banality. Mysteriously, in Crace's vision of life after catastrophe—his book is also set in America and also involves a couple trying to get to the coast—we have returned to the middle ages, as if all plastic and technological proof of our former existence had been utterly extinguished. McCarthy's single can of Coke, hallowed like a fossil, seems much more plausible than Crace's "biblical" voiding of memory and evidence. Reviewers endlessly speak of McCarthy's biblical style, but in fact this novel is sagely humdrum.

McCarthy's prose combines three registers, two of which are powerful enough to carry his horrors. He has his painstaking minimalism, which works splendidly here. Again and again he alerts us, in this simpler mode, to elements of hypothetical existence we had not thought about: how angry we might be, for instance, at the world before our catastrophe. The man comes across some old newspapers and reads them: "The curious news. The quaint concerns." He remembers standing in the charred ruins of a library, where books lay in pools of water: "Some rage at the lies arranged in their thousands row on row." In this mode the novel succeeds very well at conjuring into life the essential paradox of post-apocalyptic struggle, which is that survival is the only thing that matters, but why bother surviving?

The second register is the one familiar to readers of *Blood Meridian* or *Suttree*, and again seems somewhat Conradian. Hard detail and a fine eye is combined with exquisite, gnarled, slightly antique (and even slightly clumsy or heavy) lyricism. It ought not to work, and sometimes it does not. But many of its effects are beautiful—and not only beautiful, but powerfully efficient as poetry. The shape of a city seen from far away, standing "in the grayness like a charcoal drawing sketched across the waste." The father and son stand inside a once-grand house, "the peeling paint hanging in long dry sleavings down the columns and from the bucked soffits." The little boy has "candlecolored skin," which perfectly evokes his gray, undernourished whiteness, in a gray light that is itself undernourished and entirely reliant on candle power. The black ash that blows everywhere resembles a "soft black talc," which "blew through the streets like squid ink uncoiling along a sea floor."

When McCarthy is writing at his best, he does indeed belong in the company of the American masters. In his best pages one can hear Melville and Lawrence, Conrad and Hardy. His novels are full of marvelous depictions of birds in flight, and *The Road* has a gorgeous paragraph like something out of Hopkins:

> In that long ago somewhere very near this place he'd watched a falcon fall down the long blue wall of the mountain and break with the keel of its breastbone the midmost from a flight of cranes and take it to the river below all gangly and wrecked and trailing its loose and blowsy plumage in the still autumn air.

One of the most moving passages in the book concerns the eventual arrival of father and son at the sea. It is a great disappointment: their discovery reverses the ancient classical cry of "Thalassa, Thalassa!" There is no one and nothing there, except a huge gray watery waste, and of course the loneliness of the couple is vilely exaggerated by the endless gray water—what McCarthy calls "the endless seacrawl." The sea is covered in ash.

> Beyond that the ocean vast and cold and shifting heavily like a slowly heaving vat of slag and then the gray squall line of ash. He looked at the boy. He could see the disappointment in his face. I'm sorry it's not blue, he said. That's okay, said the boy.

Yet McCarthy's third register is more problematic. He is also an American ham. When critics laud him for being biblical, they are hearing sounds that are more often than not merely antiquarian, a kind of vatic histrionic groping, in which the prose plumes itself up and flourishes an ostentatiously obsolete lexicon. (Blood fustian, this style

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might be called.) The father and son are here described as "slumped and cowled and shivering in their rags like mendicant friars," that word "mendicant" being one of McCarthy's regular favorites. He is almost always prompted to write like this by metaphor or simile, which he often renders as hypothesis or analogy, using the formulation "like some": so the man, his face streaked with black from the rain, looks "like some old world thespian." (An especially flagrant example here, since the son is looking at his father at this moment, and the fancy language stubbornly violates a child's point of view.) In the following sentence, the word "autistic," while comprehensible, seems simply incorrect and somehow a little adolescent, and shakes one's confidence in the writer: "He rose and stood tottering in that cold autistic dark with his arms outheld for balance while the vestibular calculations in his skull cranked out their reckonings." It begins to snow at one point, and "he caught it in his hand and watched it expire there like the last host of christendom."

Still, as in Hardy and Conrad, who were both sometimes terrible writers, there is a kind of sincerity, an earnestness, in McCarthy's vaudevillian mode that softens the clumsiness, and turns the prose into a kind of awkward secret message from the writer. Conrad, after all, was capable of this description of money, in *The Secret Agent*: it "symbolized the insignificant results which reward the ambitious courage and toil of a mankind whose day is short on this earth of evil"; and in the same novel, a cheap Italian restaurant in London is said to have "the atmosphere of fraudulent cookery mocking an abject mankind in the most pressing of its miserable necessities." Moreover, McCarthy's writing tightens up as the novel progresses; it is notable that the theatrical antiquarianism belongs largely to the first fifty or so pages, as the writer pushes his barque out into new waters.

II.

All McCarthy's remarkable effects notwithstanding, there remains the matter of his meaning. There is another vaudevillian strain in *The Road*, a troubling one, in the way the novelist manipulates his theological material. McCarthy's work has always been interested in theodicy, and somewhat shallowly. Here the comparisons to Melville and Hardy are rather inexact. McCarthy likes to stage bloody fights between good and evil, and his commentary tends toward the easily fatalistic. There is nothing easy about the machinery of this book—the *mise-en-scène*, the often breathtaking writing, the terrifying concentration of the evocation—but there is something perhaps a little showy, a little glib, about the way that questions of belief are raised and dropped.

Such questions could not have been avoided. A post-apocalyptic vision cannot but provoke the dilemmas of theodicy, of the justice of fate; and a lament for the *deus absconditus* is both implicit in McCarthy's imagery—the fine simile of the sun that circles the earth "like a grieving mother with a lamp"—and explicit in his dialogue. Early in the book, the father looks at his son and thinks: "If he is not the word of God God never spoke." There are thieves and murderers and even cannibals on the loose, and the father and son encounter these fearsome envoys of evil every so often. The son needs to think of himself as "one of the good guys," and his father assures him that this is the side they are indeed on.

About halfway through *The Road*, the couple run into a pitiful old man in rags named Ely. The father asks Ely, in another of McCarthy's examples of drollery, how one would know if one were the last man on earth. "I don't guess you would know it. You'd just be it," replies Ely. "I guess God would know it," says the father, which suggests that some measure of faith has survived the end. Ely flatly asserts that "there is no God," and continues: "There is no God and we are his prophets." A little later in the conversation, the father again suggests that he sees his son as divine: "What if I said that he's a god?" Ely replies: "I hope that's not true what you said because to be on the road with the last god would be a terrible thing so I hope it's not true." Ely suggests that it will be better when everybody has died. "Better for who?" asks the father. For everybody, says Ely, closing the scene with a rather lovely peroration, of the kind that gives this book its clear, deep sound: "When we're all gone at last then there'll be nobody here but death and his days will be numbered too. He'll be out in the road there with nothing to do and nobody to do it to. He'll say: where did everybody go? And that's how it will be. What's wrong with that?"

But the idea that the boy may be the last god—an eschatological plot that is a kind of more philosophical version of *The Terminator*—lingers in the book, and is caught up again at its conclusion. It is surely this ending that has prompted newspaper critics to draw attention to "something vital and enduring about the boy's spirit," and to talk of McCarthy's "tale of survival and the miracle of goodness." I wonder what redemptive gloss, what uplifting lesson Oprah Winfrey, who has selected the novel for her remorselessly edifying book club, sees in the novel's final pages. The father, who has been ailing, dies, and the son realizes this in the morning. McCarthy's prose is movingly chaste; the reticent power of his minimalism is exactly what is needed:

> He slept close to his father that night and held him but when he woke in the morning his father was cold and stiff. He sat there a long time weeping and then he got up and walked out through the woods to the road. When he came back he knelt beside his father and held his cold hand and said his name over and over again.

So the boy is alone, but not for long. He meets a man on the road. "Are you one of the good guys?" he warily asks him. Yes, says the man. "You dont eat people," says the boy. "No. We dont eat people." So he joins the man's group, and in the novel's penultimate paragraph, a woman is seen embracing the boy and saying, "Oh … I am so glad to see you." It is the only moment in the book in which anyone other than the boy's father has embraced him.

> She would talk to him sometimes about God. He tried to talk to God but the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk to him and he didnt forget. The woman said that was all right. She said that the breath of God was his breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time.

There are several ways to read this passage. The woman seems to affirm that God, or some kind of God, still exists, and is not annihilated by the end of His creation. In this reading, the boy is indeed a kind of last God, who is "carrying the fire" of belief. (The father and son used to speak of themselves, in a kind of familial shorthand, as people who were carrying the fire: it seems to be a version of being "the good guys.") Since the breath of God passes from man to man, and God cannot die, this boy represents what will survive of humanity, and also points to how life will be rebuilt. The more pessimistic account is that the woman is just saying something to soothe the bereaved boy, and that he is both the last boy and the last God, and neither can survive in this charred world. The novel's penultimate sentence—"Not to be made right again"—is suggestive of such a reading.

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There is no obligation for *The Road* to answer an unanswerable dilemma like theodicy. It is a novel, not a treatise. But the placement of what looks like a paragraph of religious consolation at the end of such a novel is striking, and it throws the novel off balance, precisely because theology has not seemed exactly central to the book's inquiry. One has a persistent, uneasy sense that theodicy and the absent God have been merely exploited by the book, engaged with too lightly, without enough pressure of interrogation. When Ely says that "there is no God and we are his prophets," the phrase seems a little trite in its neat paradox of negation.

In this respect, to compare McCarthy to Beckett, as some reviewers have done, is to flatter McCarthy. His reticence and his minimalism work superbly at evocation, but they exhaust themselves when philosophy presses down. The style that is so good at the glancing, the lyrical, the half-expressed struggles to deal adequately with the metaphysical questions that apocalypse raises. Beyond tiny hints, we have no idea what the father and son believe about God's survival, so there is no dramatized rendition, no aesthetically responsible account, of such a question.

The theological question stirred by apocalypse is, how will all this end? What will result? "Please don't tell me how the story ends," the father silently implores early in the book. It is plain from the passage that it is not the truth about the world that he fears—he wishes to be denied only the knowledge that it may end with him killing his son. He is haunted by this apprehension, and he cannot do it: that is why he dies and tells his son to go on without him. That the question of endings is transferred onto this personal dilemma is precisely what makes the novel, and especially its conclusion, so painfully affecting. Yet the end of the world is more than a personal matter; and what this magnificent novel gains in human interest it loses by being personal at the moment when it should be theological. In this way it evades the demands, the obligations, of its subject. The question of endings in an apocalypse must be philosophical as well as merely emotional, even in a novel. Will it be heaven or hell? Will it last forever, or be over in a flash? ◆

Robert M. Solow
HEAVY THINKER

PROPHET OF INNOVATION: JOSEPH SCHUMPETER AND CREATIVE DESTRUCTION
By Thomas K. McCraw
(Harvard University Press, 719 pp., $35)

I KNEW Joseph Schumpeter only in the last five years of his life, from 1945 until his death in 1950, at the age of sixty-six. To say that I knew him is actually a bit of an exaggeration. First as a returning undergraduate and then as a doctoral student in economics at Harvard, I attended his courses on advanced economic theory and the history of economic thought. The theory lectures bordered on incoherent; they alluded to everything but analyzed nothing. He would say: "Of course you know about X or Y, so I do not have to go into detail." But we didn't know about X or Y, as he must have realized. The history lectures were also disappointing. I do not remember where they began, but at the end of the term they had barely reached Adam Smith. The course felt like a stage display of multilingual erudition.

More generally, Schumpeter seemed to be playing the role of grand seigneur, and he tended to flatter where flattery was not due, no doubt satirically. All this went along with his reputation as a casual and easy grader. We used to say that he threw the exam books up a staircase: the ones that stuck at the top got an A, the ones that fell to the bottom an A minus. I was surprised to learn that in Austrian universities he had the reputation of a stern taskmaster.

You would not gather any of this from Thomas K. McCraw's account of those last years. He records that Schumpeter was troubled by the slow course of his own work, and unhappy about his relations with his departmental colleagues; but he says that Schumpeter was enthusiastic about his teaching and successful at it. McCraw may have been misled because Schumpeter's style was always flamboyant, entertaining, and exotic, and many students enjoyed the spectacle. Maybe it is just as well to slide over Schumpeter's failings at the end. He was past his peak; and the economics profession was moving in a direction—rigorous theory couched in mathematical terms—that he had always professed to admire but simply could not practice himself. There is good evidence that earlier cohorts of Harvard students found a slightly younger Schumpeter inspiring and a force for high intellectual standards.

In 1940 Schumpeter seriously contemplated leaving Harvard to accept a financially equivalent and organizationally more attractive offer from Yale. His senior colleagues at Harvard—some able, more of them drab—sent him a letter urging him to stay; it said the right things, but was perhaps a little perfunctory. A much more urgent, heartfelt, and mindfelt letter was signed by twenty-six junior faculty and advanced graduate students. The authors included the flower not only of Harvard-trained economists of that time, but of the future of American economics. You have to admire the man who evoked those words from those people.

I wish I had known him then. It is to Schumpeter's eternal credit that, at a time when mediocrity often cottoned to mediocrity in Harvard economics, he stood always for intellectual quality and energy, regardless of ideology, ethnicity, or social position. McCraw makes this very clear, and understands its importance.

IN RECOLLECTING Schumpeter, it is hard to tear oneself away from the exotic manner, the dubious politics, the carefully crafted image, the hidden self-doubts, the convoluted life story, the complicated relations to three wives and several non-wives. McCraw covers all these in great and often fascinating detail. He makes full use of Schumpeter's diaries, which is where we learn of his self-doubt; it certainly was not evident in his public manner. On some issues—in his politics especially—he tends to give Schumpeter the benefit of the doubt, though not foolishly or blindly. One could have been harsher about Schumpeter's belief that Franklin Roosevelt was aiming at dictatorship, even if there were respectable members of the Union League Club who agreed. Still, what really matters are Schumpeter's writings—the books and a couple of essays; and that is where I have something to add. I do not fully agree with McCraw's judgments.

In my view—and that of most contemporary economists, I believe—Schumpeter's most original and most lastingly significant book was *Theory of Econom-*

Robert M. Solow is professor emeritus at MIT and Foundation Fellow of the Russell Sage Foundation. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1987.

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ic Development, which appeared in 1911 (and was translated into English in 1934). It was at the University of Czernowitz, not far from the beginning of his career as an economist, that he worked out his conception of the entrepreneur, the maker of "new combinations," as the driving force and characteristic figure of the fits-and-starts evolution of the capitalist economy. He was explicit that, while technological innovation was in the long run the most important function of the entrepreneur, organizational innovation in governance, finance, and management was comparable in significance.

Innovation is not the same thing as invention. Anyone can invent a new product or a new technique of production. The entrepreneur is the one who first sees its economic viability, bucks the odds, fights or worms his way into the market, and eventually wins or loses. Each win means profit for the entrepreneur and his backers, and it also means a jog upward for the whole economy. In the course of this process, which cannot possibly run smoothly, many businesses, individuals, and institutions, themselves founded on earlier successful innovations, will be undermined and swept away. Schumpeter called this birth-and-death process "creative destruction," and realized before anyone else that it was the main source of economic growth. There is no feasible alternative for capitalism; this *is* capitalism. Here is a characteristically strong statement: "Without innovations, no entrepreneurs; without entrepreneurial achievement, no capitalist returns and no capitalist propulsion. The atmosphere of industrial revolutions—of 'progress'—is the only one in which capitalism can survive."

The picture generated by classical and neoclassical economics had none of this dynamism, turbulence, and intrinsic uncertainty. (Malthus was perhaps a partial exception.) Smooth trends and stationary states, equilibria of one kind or another, predominated. There is a sense in which Schumpeter could claim to have been the progenitor of a torrent of modern research that analyzes the dynamics of profit-driven innovation and innovation-driven economic growth. Even creative destruction has been translated into equations. (The pioneers were Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt, and others have followed.)

Schumpeter derived from this analysis a lasting bias in favor of big business. "American opinion is so anti–big business," he wrote, "precisely because big business has made the country what it is now and in doing so it has set the standard of the American soul: who is not a part of big business feels he does not meet the standard and by compensation turns against it." Clearly a successful innovation confers, in his view, at least a temporary monopoly. Without the lure of those monopoly profits, there would be no incentive for anyone to bear the risks of entrepreneurship. Schumpeter believed that large firms were both the source and the result of successful innovation; and so tampering with them would be dangerous. But the issue is more subtle than that. The English economist John Hicks once remarked that "the best of all monopoly profits is a quiet life," meaning that a seller with monopoly power might settle for less than the largest possible profit in order to avoid attracting rivals who would have to be beaten off amid turmoil and uncertainty. There is much evidence that having to compete with best practice is itself an important spur both to innovation and to other aspects of industrial performance. Maybe there is an optimal intensity of competition.

Joseph Schumpeter by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

I think that this is Schumpeter's main legacy to economics: the role of technological and organizational innovation in driving and shaping the growth trajectory of capitalist economies. Whole subfields of economics now pursue the subject of the care, feeding, and consequences of innovation, using qualitative and quantitative, historical and mathematical methods. McCraw gives only a few pages to *Theory of Economic Development*. He certainly understands that it is fundamental, but he does not place it as the summa that it is.

I agree with him, however, that the two-volume *Business Cycles* of 1939 was a massive failure, in both senses of the phrase. (I still have the yellowing copy that I bought as a student. It was, and still is, essentially unreadable.) Schumpeter probably intended it as his entry in a competition with Keynes's *General Theory*, which appeared three years earlier, but it made no visible impression on the profession or the public. The book is full of detail about the rise and fall of firms, technologies, and industries, but it does not rise to the status of a theory of business cycles. It is more like a map on the scale of one foot equals two feet: you see the potholes, but you do not learn much about the scenery.

McCraw does not really discuss the main piece of new intellectual machinery that Schumpeter hoped to impose on the jumble of business-cycle history to convert it into a comprehensible tale. That was a system of three oscillations or waves superimposed on one another: a forty-month Kitchin cycle, a roughly ten-year Juglar cycle, and a long Kondratieff cycle of about fifty years. (Kitchin and Juglar were economists of considerable obscurity, and Kondratieff only a little less.) I don't suppose that anyone under the age of eighty remembers any of this, though there remain a few devotees of the Kondratieff cycle. To see six complete cycles, you would have to go back nearly three hundred years. It makes for good stories, maybe too easily.

This three-cycle scheme is a pointer to the main theoretical flaw in the book. Schumpeter wanted to place the entrepreneurial innovation process at the heart not only of episodic growth but also of the repetitive "business cycle" (or at least of the two longer species of cycles). McCraw seems to go along. But it does not work. After considerable experimentation, economics has given up on any such periodicities. Whatever was true of the more distant past (when the data were poor anyway), the texts of modern history do not fall into a pattern

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of regular, repetitive cycles. Instead, "the business cycle" has become shorthand for the series of irregular, short-run, aggregative fluctuations of varying duration, magnitude, and—probably—causation that we call prosperity and recession.

Schumpeter had a rise-and-fall mechanism in mind. The monopoly profits collected by a successful entrepreneurial firm attract imitators and competitors, many of which are financed by fresh credit. This activity eventually erodes the initial profits; and then the time is ripe for another innovation, if one comes along. There is obvious truth to this story, but it is far from being a theory of economy-wide fluctuations.

Business Cycles was surely a great disappointment to its author. Schumpeter had, essentially single-handedly, written this detailed 1,100-page narrative of events in Britain, Germany, and the United States as seen through the lens of creative destruction. It must have used up a dreadful amount of even his enormous energy. And the world of economics just kept on arguing about Keynes.

In 1942, Schumpeter published *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, which was reprinted and translated many times. It was his most successful book by a wide margin, and it is certainly a big canvas. McCraw thinks of it as a landmark of twentieth-century social science, and gives it many pages of description and discussion. I do not think it comes close to being that important; but I have to admit that I have a general distrust of ambitious, overarching attempts to capture a whole socioeconomic system in a few grand generalizations.

The book reiterates the standard Schumpeterian vision of capitalist turmoil and transformation, with the entrepreneurs as the indispensable heroes. This time he suggests a mechanism within capitalist society that (inevitably?) causes it to undermine itself. The children and grandchildren of successful entrepreneurs, precisely the people with the right DNA, are seduced by inherited wealth into intellectual pursuits, the arts, aristocratic habits, perhaps even into left-wing or at least anti-capitalist ideologies. It is not the proletariat that blows up the capitalist edifice, which is in fact good for the proletariat. It is the second generation of successful entrepreneurs that lets the ground floor decay.

Is this in fact a common pattern? Is it more likely than simple chance would imply? Schumpeter can tell good tales, but it is hard to know if they are the only, or the typical, tales. He also makes the rather paradoxical argument that, with long habit, even the process of innovation itself becomes routinized and depersonalized, and therefore weakened. Can he really have believed that successful capitalism is *essentially* a romantic virtue? There is little doubt that the heroic view of entrepreneurship came naturally to Schumpeter. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* is the kind of swan song that yields willingly to Schumpeter's "vision" without a lot of critical analysis.

The chapters on socialism are written almost ironically. Many passages accept, mock-seriously, the benefits in efficiency and equity that have always been claimed for socialism and public-spirited central planning; but then come all the qualifications, Orwellian and worse, often drawn from the experience of the Soviet Union. Saving, for instance, can simply be extracted by the state. "Hardships and 'abstinence' have been imposed such as in capitalist society could ever have enforced." Under socialism, however, this rigor "presumably will command that moral allegiance which is being increasingly returned to capitalism." *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* is a well-done polemic from a supremely sophisticated Central European. I don't know if it can be classified as social science, but I do think that most of it is true.

Which brings us to the "democracy" in Schumpeter's title. He was not a democrat by instinct or by reflection. He had little confidence in the ability of the average citizen to vote intelligently, or even in his own long-run interest. His book asks if democratic socialism is possible. The conclusion is that perhaps it is possible in principle, but almost surely not in practice. Democratic capitalism is what we have, but democratic resentment and democratic ignorance tend to work against capitalist success, either by accepting socialism or by fostering over-regulation.

For these reasons, Schumpeter could not conceive that a permanent mixed economy was a viable proposition. He called it "capitalism in an oxygen tent." For him, capitalism is the civilization of a few family fortunes and broad inequality. Democracy, he thought, must turn out to be "laboristic," and therefore inimical to capitalist success. This conclusion was a major error, as McCraw says. It has been soundly contradicted empirically by the sixty years and counting since World War II. Nor was this a mere slip of judgment. Schumpeter's mistake was rooted in his political and social attitudes and even, to some extent, in his characterization of entrepreneurship and the dynamics of capitalism.

TOMASZ WALENTA

As against McCraw, I cannot see this book as a major work of "social economics." My guess is that Schumpeter did not really think so either. (He said as much, but that could have been false modesty.) When the publisher asked for new material for later editions, Schumpeter was content to tack on minor things that he had written about the postwar economy, especially the view that the Soviet Union had been the big winner, having picked the pockets of Churchill and Roosevelt (whom Schumpeter hated anyway). This is not how you treat your life's great work.

I will not discuss *History of Economic Analysis*, edited and published after his death by his wife Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter. It is very long and very recondite. Instead, I think one can learn more about Schumpeter from two books that he did not write. During his prime years, he was episodically working at a book about money. One can see why he might have tried. He had spent some years in private banking, and a shorter unsuccessful interval as minister of finance in Austria. He had published a couple of relevant essays; and *Theory of Economic Development* emphasizes the creation of credit by the banking system as part of the process by which banks finance would-be entrepreneurs. But he did not have much aptitude for monetary theory, or any important idea to transmit. When the bits he had written down were published as a book in the 1970s, it attracted little attention.

Then, in his later years, he thought about writing a treatise that would summarize "Schumpeterian economics." Most especially he contemplated a "preliminary volume" that would summarize the treatise to come, and would tell his story in a style that could reach a broader professional and non-professional audience. This was clearly intended as his answer to Keynes. The internalized rivalry with Keynes, his exact contemporary, for the title of World's Leading Economist seems to have nagged frequently at Schumpeter.

But he seemed not to understand what Keynesian economics was about, or why it won over the younger generation. For example, he described Keynes as the apostle of consumer spending (in contrast to his own em-

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phasis on innovational investment). But in fact consumer spending is passive in Keynes's *General Theory*. The driving force of the aggregate economy is actually investment spending; and Keynes put great causal weight on "animal spirits" and "the state of long-run expectations," both of which are much more akin to entrepreneurial drive.

Similarly, Schumpeter charged Keynes with being a "stagnationist" (in contrast to his own belief that there was no natural limit to entrepreneurial energy and innovation). This is a more complicated matter. The Keynesian framework could accommodate stagnationist ideas about the drying-up of profitable investment opportunities; and in other hands it did. Keynes certainly did not admire "money-grubbing," and he would have classified a hot-to-trot Schumpeterian entrepreneur as a money-grubber. That is not stagnationism. It is probably more accurate to say that Keynes erred in a different way, by thinking that consumers might become satiated as their incomes rose and could be left with neither the wish to spend nor the capacity to enjoy leisure.

It is possible to see Keynesian and Schumpeterian ideas as complementary. Keynes is about short-run economic fluctuations brought about by erratic variations in the willingness of investors and governments to spend; Schumpeter is about the long-run trajectory driven by the erratic march of technological progress. This complementarity only became clear later, after both men had died, when economic growth became an explicit objective of public policy and topic of systematic analysis. Schumpeter was left frustrated by the younger generation's affinity for his rival. In any case, the "preliminary volume" never materialized.

The world turns. Today, some sixty years after their deaths, Schumpeter's star probably outshines Keynes's. The business cycle has receded in importance, partly because the large industrial economies have sprouted a more stable structure, and partly because the lessons that Keynes taught have been learned by central banks and finance ministries. Instead, long-term economic growth has moved to the top of the political and intellectual agenda, and that was Schumpeter's topic. As Robert Lucas memorably put it, once you have begun to think about economic growth, it is hard to think about anything else. It is a pity that troubled old Schumpeter did not live to see the triumph of his obsession.

There was another source of Schumpeter's unhappiness during that last decade, and of his tendency to withdraw from his colleagues. He had been ambivalent—worse than ambivalent, some thought—about the war itself. His wife had many associations with Japan, where she had done research. More importantly, Schumpeter believed that a strong Germany was all that kept western civilization from being overrun by the Bolshevik hordes. He did not exactly want to see Germany win; but he did not want to see Germany lose. He would certainly have preferred to see Western Europe and the United States join Germany in a struggle against the Soviet Union. Would he have swallowed Hitler if that were necessary? There is no way to know, but the fact that one can ask the question exposes the problem. The man was all problems, and one very important idea. ◆

Cass R. Sunstein
THE THIN LINE

THE LUCIFER EFFECT: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOOD PEOPLE TURN EVIL
By Philip Zimbardo
(Random House, 551 pp., $27.95)

WHY DO human beings commit despicable acts? One answer points to individual dispositions; another answer emphasizes situational pressures. In 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed the importance of individual dispositions in describing terrorists as "simply evil people who want to kill." Situationists reject this view. They believe that horrible acts can be committed by perfectly normal people. The most extreme situationists insist that in the right circumstances, almost all of us might be led to commit atrocities.

The situationist view has received strong support from some of the most famous experiments in social science, conducted by the psychologist Stanley Milgram in the early 1960s. In those experiments, ordinary people were asked to administer electric shocks to a person sitting in an adjacent room. Milgram's subjects were told, falsely, that the purpose of the experiments was to test the effects of punishment on memory. Unbeknown to the experiment's subjects, the person in that adjacent room was Milgram's confederate, and there were no real shocks. The apparent shocks were delivered by a simulated shock generator, offering thirty clearly delineated voltage levels, ranging from 15 to 450 volts, accompanied by verbal descriptions ranging from "Slight Shock" to "XXX." As the experiment unfolded, the subject was asked to administer increasingly severe shocks for incorrect answers, well past the "Danger, Severe Shock" level, which began at 375 volts.

In Milgram's original experiments, the subjects included forty men between the ages of twenty and fifty. They came from a range of occupations, including engineers, high school teachers, and postal clerks. What do you think you would do as a participant in such an experiment? What do you think that others would do? Most people predict that in such studies almost all subjects would refuse to proceed to the end of the series of shocks. The expected break-off point is the "Very Strong Shock" of 195 volts. In Milgram's experiment, however, every one of the forty subjects went beyond 300 volts. A large majority—twenty-six of the forty subjects, or 65 percent—went to the full 450-volt shock, five steps beyond "Danger, Severe Shock." Replications of Milgram's experiments, with thousands of diverse people in numerous countries, show essentially the same behavior. And women do not behave differently from men.

Milgram explained his results as demonstrating obedience to authority, in a way reminiscent of the behavior of Germans under Nazi rule. Indeed, he conducted his experiments in large part to understand how the Holocaust could have happened. Milgram concluded that ordinary people will follow orders even if the result is to produce great suffering in innocent others. Asked whether something like Nazism could occur in the United States, Milgram memorably replied that "if a system of death camps were set up in the United States of the sort we had seen in Nazi Germany, one would be able to find sufficient personnel for those camps in any medium-sized American town."

MILGRAM'S experiments involved an authority figure, in the form of a professor explicitly asking people to participate in an apparently reputable experiment. In 1971,

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Philip Zimbardo conducted a different study of situational influences. The basic idea was to ask ordinary young men to act as either prisoners or guards in a mock prison for a period of two weeks. Zimbardo's remarkable finding was that after just a few days, apparently normal people, acting as guards in the mock prison, turned cruel and even sadistic—not because anyone ordered them to act that way, but as a result of the role in which they found themselves. As a consequence of the cruelty of the guards and the disintegration of several of the prisoners, Zimbardo's experiment had to be terminated after only six days.

In his new book, Zimbardo gives the full story of the Stanford Prison Experiment for the first time. Generalizing from that story, he suggests that dispositionism is a serious error, that good and evil are largely a function of our contexts and our roles, and that almost all of us are capable of real evil, given the proper situation. Zimbardo uses his experiment to cast light on diverse problems, including the conduct of American soldiers at Abu Ghraib, airplane accidents, human inaction in the face of evident cruelty, the mistreatment of patients in hospitals, and the behavior of suicide bombers and terrorists in general.

The Stanford Prison Experiment started with an ad in a local newspaper asking for volunteers for a study of prison life, lasting two weeks and paying $15 a day (about $75 by current standards). Seventy of those who answered the ad were called to Stanford for interviews and to take a series of psychological tests. All seventy were American college students; most had completed summer-school courses at Stanford or Berkeley. Twenty-four of them were selected on the ground that they were the most healthy and normal. Half were randomly assigned to be prison guards; the other half were randomly assigned to be prisoners. All of them indicated that they would prefer to be prisoners, in part on the ground that while they could not imagine being a prison guard after college, they could imagine being in jail, and they thought that they might learn from the experience. (Remember, this was 1971.) All of them agreed to participate through informed consent forms. They were also informed that if they were assigned the role of prisoners, they would suffer deprivations of their civil rights and have only minimally adequate diet and medical care. Those assigned to be prisoners were also told to wait at home on a particular Sunday, when they would be contacted to begin the experiment.

On that day, they were surprised to find themselves "arrested" by actual Stanford police officers (enlisted by Zimbardo), who handcuffed them, searched them, warned them of their rights, and booked them at police headquarters. Brought to a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology department, they were stripped, deloused, and made to wear smocks, without underwear, and with numbers sewn on front and back. They were also forced to wear ankle chains and nylon stocking caps (not having been asked to shave their heads). They walked in uncomfortable rubber thongs. Having worked with one of Zimbardo's graduate students, the guards read the prisoners a series of rules: "prisoners will be allowed five minutes in the lavatory," "prisoners must address each other by number only," "prisoners must never refer to their condition as an 'experiment' or a 'simulation,'" and others. Somewhat ominously, prisoners were told that the last rule was the most important: "Failure to obey any of the above rules may result in punishment."

The first day of the experiment was awkward for guards and prisoners alike, and not terribly eventful. Some of the guards did seem to relish their role, asking prisoners to do push-ups as "punishment" for laughing at some of the guards' comments. Whenever a prisoner showed an irreverent attitude, he was likely to be asked to do more push-ups. Some guards engaged in acts of what Zimbardo calls "arbitrary cruelty"—say, by leaning on prisoners and pushing them back with billy clubs.

Things got much worse on Monday. On that day the prisoners staged a rebellion, ripping off their numbers, refusing to obey commands, and mocking the guards. Zimbardo asked the guards to take steps to control the situation, and they did exactly that. Their responses consisted of forcing the prisoners to do jumping jacks and push-ups; stripping them naked in their cells; depriving them of meals, pillows, blankets, and beds; and placing them in solitary confinement. Some of the prisoners were baffled by the sheer aggressiveness of the response, with one screaming wildly, "No, no, no! This is an *experiment*! Leave me alone! Shit, let go of me, fucker! You're not going to take our fucking beds!" The rebellion was effectively crushed.

As the behavior of the guards became increasingly aggressive and humiliating, one of the prisoners, a fellow named Doug, broke down and asked to be released. Zimbardo, having adopted the role of "prison superintendent," met with him privately. Zimbardo told Doug that he would forfeit his payment if he quit early, asked him to serve as an informer in return for "special privileges," and generally convinced him to continue. Returning to the prison, Doug falsely announced to the other prisoners that they could not leave. Shortly thereafter his own stress reactions appeared to become hysterical, even pathological, as he threatened violence against both the guards and himself; and he was indeed released. On each of the next three days, another prisoner showed acute stress reactions and had to be released. The remaining prisoners became subdued and "zombie-like."

What of the guards? The picture was one of growing cruelty, aggression, and dehumanization. Sometimes without provocation, the guards stripped the prisoners naked, hooded them, chained them, denied them food or bedding privileges, put them into solitary confinement, and made them clean toilet bowls with their bare hands. There was sexual humiliation as well. On Thursday, one of the most aggressive guards, nicknamed "John Wayne," called out to several of the prisoners, "See that hole in the ground? Now do twenty-five push-ups, *fucking* that hole! You hear me!" The prisoners dutifully obeyed. He continued, "Now you two, you're male camels. Stand behind the female camels and *hump* them." Submitting to the order, the prisoners simulated sodomy.

The experiment ended prematurely after Zimbardo enlisted the help of Christina Maslach, a recent Stanford Ph.D. in psychology who was starting her career as an assistant professor at Berkeley. In Maslach's own words, "I looked at the line of hooded, shuffling, chained prisoners, with guards shouting orders at them.... I was overwhelmed by a chilling, sickening feeling." Refusing to engage Zimbardo's claim that this was "amazing stuff," Maslach ended up in a heated argument with him (notwithstanding the fact that they were romantically involved at the time). She describes the "fight" as "too long and too traumatic," but eventually Zimbardo acknowledged that the experiment had had an adverse effect on him as well as on the student subjects. He decided to halt the experiment on Friday. (Maslach and Zimbardo later married, and the book is dedicated to her.)

Zimbardo wants to draw large lessons from his experiment. He insists that individual dispositions are far less important than we tend to think they are, and that situational pressures can lead decent people to commit terri-

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ble acts. Recall that the prisoners and the guards were randomly assigned to their roles: "The line between Good and Evil, once thought to be impermeable, proved instead to be quite permeable." Those assigned to be prisoners behaved as prisoners and were in a sense broken by the role. Those assigned to be guards behaved badly, even viciously, their general normality notwithstanding. "At the start of this experiment, there were no differences between the two groups; less than a week later, there were no similarities between them," Zimbardo writes. Notably, the prisoners were skeptical of the claim of random assignment and insisted, after the conclusion of the experiment, that the guards were taller than they were. (They were wrong; the two groups had the same average height.)

In pointing to the power of situational influences, Zimbardo draws on a wide range of evidence. In one experiment, twenty-one of twenty-two nurses were willing to follow a doctor's orders to give a twenty-milliliter dose of the fictitious drug "Astrogen"—even though the label clearly stated that five milliliters was the usual dose and warned that ten milliliters was the maximum. Similar deference to authority can be found outside of social science experiments. Almost half of the nurses surveyed responded that they could remember a time when they had actually "carried out a physician's order that [they] felt could have had harmful consequences to the patient." According to one study, excessive obedience on the part of the first officer, in deference to bad judgments by the captain, may be responsible for as many as one-quarter of airplane accidents.

Or consider the fact that no fewer than sixty-eight fast-food restaurants have been subject to successful "strip-search scams," in which a male caller, masquerading as a police officer named Scott, informs an assistant store manager that an employee at the restaurant has committed theft. Having learned a great deal about the local conditions, "Officer Scott" asks the manager for the name of an attractive female employee who, Scott says, has been engaged in theft and is likely to have contraband on her now. "Officer Scott" is then allowed to talk to the employee, and he tells her that she has two choices. She can come to police headquarters to be strip-searched or instead be strip-searched at that very moment by a fellow employee. Believing herself to be innocent, the employee consents to the latter. "Officer Scott" then instructs that fellow employee to search the young woman's most private places, with the store's video cameras looking on. (In some cases, "Officer Scott" asked for still more humiliating acts, and the employees were obedient. I omit the details.)

Drawing on studies of the apparent normality of those involved in Nazi war crimes, Zimbardo gives a social-science twist to Hannah Arendt's claim about the "banality of evil." He adds that suicide bombers are themselves quite normal by every objective measure. Contrary to a widespread view, they are not poor or badly educated, or mentally ill. In his account, their actions are made possible by their social networks and the successful use of "a variety of social psychological and motivational principles to assist in turning collective hatred and general frenzy into a dedicated, seriously calculated program of indoctrination and training for individuals to become youthful living martyrs."

In explaining what makes atrocities possible, Zimbardo places a large emphasis on "de-individuation"—a process by which both perpetrators and victims become essentially anonymous and are thereby transformed into a type or a role. The very decision to wear a particular uniform can have significant behavioral effects; warriors who change their appearance in preparation for war are more likely to brutalize their enemies. During the process of de-individuation, people enter a state of arousal in which they do not face the ordinary social sanctions and in which their own moral doubts are silenced. In Zimbardo's account, de-individuation ensures the triumph of "the Dionysian trait of uninhibited release and lust" over the "Apollonian central trait" of "constraint and the inhibition of desire."

Zimbardo believes that these general points, and the Stanford Prison Experiment in particular, help to explain the horrific behavior of American soldiers at Abu Ghraib. Recall the well-publicized incidents, some of them photographed, in which soldiers humiliated prisoners by leading them around by dog leashes, forcing them to simulate fellatio, and making them masturbate in front of a cigarette-smoking female soldier (herself giving a high-five salute of approval). American personnel also threatened male detainees with rape, beat them with broom handles and chairs, punched and kicked them, and forced them to wear women's underwear. Zimbardo argues that such abuses were a predictable consequence of situational forces, not (as prominent military leaders have urged) of the dispositions of rogue soldiers or a few bad apples: "It was as though the worst-case scenario of our prison experiment had been carried out over months under horrendous conditions, instead of in our brief, relatively benign simulated prison." Zimbardo insists that the real blame lies not with the soldiers but with the situation in general, including "leadership failures, little or no mission-specific training, inadequate resources, and interrogation-confession priorities."

Despite his emphasis on the human susceptibility to commit evil acts, Zimbardo ends on an upbeat note, exploring how people might resist pressures and offering numerous examples of heroic behavior. He calls attention to the value of learning to assert one's independence and of being alert to the surprising force of the social "frames" in which we find ourselves. (Some of his advice is banal and even embarrassing: "I can oppose unjust systems," or "I made a mistake!" or—worst of all—"I am Me, the best I can be.") Zimbardo's catalogue of heroes includes people who rebelled against apartheid, McCarthyism, and the Vietnam War. He finds that "heroic behavior is rare enough not to be readily predictable by any psychological assessments of personality," though some people display heroism even under immense pressure to conform or to obey.

Zimbardo's discussion is passionate and illuminating, and he accumulates massive evidence on behalf of his central claim, about the power of situational pressures. Still, it is hard to evaluate his conclusions without exploring two problems. The first involves the precise mechanisms that produce the outcomes that he describes. The second involves the limits of situationism, which does not, I think, have the unambiguous support that Zimbardo claims for it. To approach these problems, we need to return to Milgram's experiments.

Why, exactly, did the subjects in those experiments show a willingness to administer painful shocks to innocent people? Were the subjects in a Dionysian state of de-individuation? Certainly not. When they obeyed the experimenter, it was because they deferred to his knowledge and his authority. If an apparently reputable experimenter asks subjects to proceed, most might believe, not unreasonably, that any harm done to the victims is not serious, and that the experiment actually has significant benefits for society. (In Milgram's experiments, they would have been right to think so.) On this account, many of the subjects would have put their moral qualms to one side not out of blind obedience, but because

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of a judgment that any such qualms were probably ill-founded. And if nurses are willing to follow doctors' instructions even to the point of exceeding a recommended dose, it might be because they think that if the doctor wants to go past the recommended dose, it is probably for perfectly good reasons. When nurses carry out the wishes of doctors and put their own doubts to one side, it is probably because they are willing to defer to those who have more information.

The behavior of first officers in the cockpit, and of those victimized by the "Officer Scott" scam, can be understood in similar terms. The straightforward lesson is that people often follow the instructions of authorities who appear to have superior expertise. Much of the time such deference is desirable, a sensible rule of thumb. As a general practice, nurses should not second-guess the medical decisions of doctors. In the cockpit, first officers should usually follow the captain. Citizens should generally cooperate with the police. But problems can arise, and tragedy too, if a clever experiment or ordinary life produces a situation in which the authorities are wrong or have lost their moral compass. On this view, the main social-science finding is that people commit bad acts when their usually sensible rule of thumb goes wrong in particular cases.

Yet none of this is sufficient to explain the Stanford Prison Experiment. Neither prisoners nor guards were deferring to an experimenter who was asking them to engage in morally objectionable actions. To be sure, Zimbardo did ask the guards to impose real pressure on the prisoners: "We can create fear in them, to some degree. We can create a notion of the arbitrariness that governs their lives, which are totally controlled by us.... They will be able to do nothing and say nothing that we don't permit. We're going to take away their individuality in various ways." But the guards went far beyond Zimbardo's instructions. Zimbardo did not tell the guards to force prisoners to clean toilets with their bare hands or to pretend to sodomize one another.

The prisoners' reactions are more understandable and less interesting than those of the guards. College students in or near Palo Alto suddenly find themselves handcuffed, stripped, and jailed. It is an experiment, to be sure; but it is lived as if it were reality. Early on, a fellow prisoner tells them that they cannot leave; they are going to be held as prisoners, and to be treated however the guards like, for the full two weeks (unless they completely break down). In a setting of this kind, the student prisoners might well become desperate or panicked. Others might rebel against the guards, but when the rebellion is broken, they might well shut down and become "zombies" for the duration of the experiment. Fighting and shutting down are emphatically human reactions to terrifying situations, and in Zimbardo's experiment, those reactions were perfectly understandable.

The most interesting puzzle is the behavior of the guards. How could ordinary college students show such a high level of aggression and cruelty? It is true that no authority was issuing orders to the prison guards. But Zimbardo specifically instructed guards to assume a particular role, in which they had "total power," with the task of producing "the required psychological state in the prisoners for as long as the study lasted." Zimbardo, a professor at Stanford, told college students to make the students "feel as though they were in prison." These instructions, alongside the very role of the guard, conveyed certain information about what should be done. Those who find themselves operating as prison guards know that they should behave in certain ways. This is no less true in an experimental setting than elsewhere. Indeed, the experimental setting might have aggravated the behavior of some of the guards, who knew that certain safeguards were in place and that their specific task was to induce "the required psychological state."

If prisoners rebel, guards are certainly supposed to respond. Recall that Sunday, the first day of Zimbardo's experiment, was awkward and largely uneventful. It was on Monday that the prisoners undertook their rebellion, and Zimbardo instructed his guards that it was their job to control the situation. In the aftermath things started to get ugly, and they went downhill from there. Perhaps a different experiment, at a different place and with different subjects, would have had a different outcome—not necessarily a good one, but with significantly less in the way of cruelty and abuse.

These speculations may be wrong, but even if they are right they do not amount to an objection to situationism. Notice here a big difference between Milgram's experiments and what happened at the Stanford mock prison. Milgram's initial studies were replicable and replicated (repeatedly). We know for a fact that most people are willing to follow the experimenter's instructions and to administer painful shocks. We even have good clues about what underlies their behavior. Zimbardo himself thinks that it would be ethically problematic to try to replicate his experiment, and very few efforts have been made to do so. (The most noteworthy, in Australia, produced a conclusion broadly similar to Zimbardo's.) I do not mean to doubt Zimbardo's convincing argument that social roles and contextual pressures can lead normal people to do very bad things. But we do not know whether and when prison guards will show the same degree of cruelty and sadism.

For purely situational accounts of human behavior, there is an evident problem. The Stanford Prison Experiment uncovered significant differences among both prisoners and guards. Some of the prisoners could not handle the situation and essentially screamed, "Let me out of here!"—in part, perhaps, as a strategic effort to escape a terrible situation. Some of the guards did their jobs, but without cruelty, and they did various favors for the prisoners. These identifiably "good guards" were altogether different from others, whose behavior was sadistic. To his credit, Zimbardo acknowledges the diversity of behavior on the part of the guards. In his own words, "some guards have transformed into perpetrators of evil, and other guards have become passive contributors to the evil through their inaction." So dispositions did matter. There is a real difference between the "perpetrators" and the "passive contributors."

Here is one way to think about Zimbardo's findings, designed to sort out the relationship between dispositions and social contexts. In experimental settings and in the real world, most people will be reluctant to harm others. Often their reluctance can be overcome with appropriate incentives and the right information. If people can be assured that any harm is small or nonexistent, or necessary to produce some greater good, they might well put their moral qualms to one side. (Recall Milgram's experiments.) If people can be assured that any harm is deserved, or part of legitimate punishment, then they might well be willing to inflict harm. (Prison guards do not refuse to put recalcitrant prisoners in solitary confinement.) But—and this is the key point—different people have radically different "thresholds" that must be met before they will be willing to harm others.

Some people—the "bad guards" in Zimbardo's experiment—have a real capacity for sadism and cruelty; that capacity is built into their dispositions. If such people are instructed to act sadistically,

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or merely authorized to do so, they will. Other people have somewhat higher thresholds. They will require strong situational assurance that harming others is justified or acceptable, all things considered. Still other people—Zimbardo's "heroes"—have exceedingly high thresholds, or perhaps their moral convictions operate as an absolute barrier. There is a continuum of thresholds from the sadists to the heroes, or from the devils to the saints.

If all this is right, we can understand why different prison experiments might have different outcomes. A great deal depends on the initial mix of dispositions. A group of low-threshold guards will behave very differently from a group of high-threshold guards, in part because of their antecedent inclinations, and in part because of social interactions among them. One of the more remarkable findings in modern social science is that after deliberating with one another, groups of people typically end up at a more extreme point in line with preexisting tendencies. It follows that a set of low-threshold guards might well become very cruel indeed, whereas a set of high-threshold guards will probably behave pretty well. With mixed groups, we could easily imagine a range of outcomes, ranging from extreme cruelty to comparative generosity. If the low-threshold guards act first and influence their high-threshold colleagues, cruelty is likely; if the high-threshold guards act first and influence the low-threshold types, the outcome will be much better. (Hierarchical relationships at many organizations—including schools, workplaces, and religious organizations— can be understood in roughly analogous terms. Teachers, employers, and religious leaders may take on some of the characteristics of aggressive prison guards; individual thresholds and social interactions make all the difference.)

A great deal depends as well on the specific incentives and on existing information. Most low-threshold types will not show cruelty unless they are given at least some incentive to do so. Those with relatively high thresholds might be willing to show considerable aggression if their incentives are strong enough. Of course, beliefs can have a significant impact. Suppose that people are informed that aggression is justified or necessary in the circumstances. Perhaps they learn, or are told, that the victims of their aggression are wrongdoers who deserve whatever they get. Or perhaps they learn that they are a part of a group of people who have been systematically humiliated by others, and who are entirely justified in responding to past humiliation. Or perhaps they learn that certain individuals, or certain groups, are bad by disposition, innately inferior, perhaps even subhuman, and must be treated accordingly. Dispositions are partly a product of beliefs, contributing to low or high thresholds; and once belief-driven dispositions are in place, social situations can add fresh information, often overcoming the relevant threshold.

What emerges is a clear challenge to the most ambitious claims for situationism, and a more complicated understanding of the relationship between individual dispositions and social situations. And there is a final point. Zimbardo shows that the very assumption of a particular social role automatically conveys a great deal of information about appropriate behavior: consider the roles of nurse, first officer, and prison guard. But social roles are not fixed. Nurses and first officers need not think that they should always follow doctors and captains, and prison guards need not feel free to brutalize prisoners. Perhaps the largest lesson of Zimbardo's experiment involves the importance of ensuring that a constant sense of moral responsibility is taken to be part of, rather than inconsistent with, a wide range of social roles. ◆

Peter Green

DRINK AND THE OLD DEVIL

THE LIFE OF KINGSLEY AMIS
By Zachary Leader
(Pantheon Books, 996 pp., $39.95)

I.

What essential ingredients go to make up a satirist? In particular, what high-octane social gases are needed to fuel, and to spark, his (seldom, till the feminist revolution, her) process of internal combustion? *Facit indignatio versum*, snarled Juvenal, that poverty-stricken and passé gentleman place-seeker, two millennia ago: it is resentment that drives me to write. Cliché-ridden hack writing, jumped-up rich lower-class arrivistes, pushy aggressive women, trendy homosexuals, pretentious bores, above all Greeks (Juvenal's anti-Hellenic rant has all the qualities of later anti-Semitism): there is a timeless flavor about the list of his pet hates. Byron, a very different social animal, similarly pilloried fools, bores, bad literature, and bluestockings (who provoked, in *Don Juan*, one of his most ingenious rhymes: "But—Oh! Ye lords of ladies intellectual, / Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?") Jonathan Swift, who had time for individuals but detested mankind, was the same: "Hated by fools, and fools to hate, / Be that my motto and my fate."

Cruel wit, a delight in ridicule, a short-fuse temper, a bottomless well of bile: these are the satirist's weapons, and they have not changed much down the ages. It also helps to have a grievance. Gilbert Highet, many decades ago in *The Anatomy of Satire*, was not the only critic to have noted the number of satirists who "have been impelled by a rankling sense of personal inferiority, of social injustice, of exclusion from a privileged group." Hunger stimulates resentment and puts an edge on the appetite.

The twentieth century's supreme satirist in English fiction, it is now generally agreed, was Evelyn Waugh, who with an unremittingly caustic eye dispatched the odder habits of Britain's class-ridden society (not to mention American funeral practices) in light and witty Augustan prose. But in Waugh's case an interesting and dangerous metamorphosis took place. The middle-class chronicler of upper-class follies himself fell hook, line, and sinker for the romance of English aristocratic Catholicism, with its great houses and recusant peerages. While this actually sharpened Waugh's attacks on left-wing trendies and the lower middle classes (especially the products of post-1945 political egalitarianism), it also released that streak of hagiolatric Pre-Raphaelite sentimentality—already detectable in *A Handful of Dust*—that was to turn so much of *Brideshead Revisited* into embarrassing mush. It is hard to tell at times whether Waugh is more enamored of God or the Marchmain family, and his correspondence makes it all too clear that this was no case of the author assuming a fictional persona.

Peter Green is an emeritus professor of classics, the former fiction critic of the London Daily Telegraph, and an occasional novelist, translator, and poet.

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Waugh dearly loved a lord; and for him a global hierarchy based on Rome had the additional cachet of trumping all merely national snobberies, not least those that might keep him out.

His anxieties, memorably crystallized in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, were well-grounded. The titled recipients of Waugh's adoration did not reciprocate ("that vulgar little man in his awful check suits" was how one of them summed him up to me), and Waugh ended his days as a bloated, petulant blimp, playing the country-house squire, soaking up gin and chloral, arguing with Nancy Mitford about U and non-U, and writing testy letters to *The Times* about slumping standards in manners, morals, and education. J. B. Priestley, reviewing *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, argued that the evidently autobiographical crack-up it described was the direct result of Pinfold (that is, Waugh) living a lie by falsely assimilating himself to the class that he worshiped. That hit near the mark.

Waugh's career, in fact, offered several salutary warnings to an aspiring satirical novelist. Stay on the outside looking in: otherwise you are all too liable to end up indistinguishable from what you started by satirizing. Watch out if you become fashionable and successful: nothing is more calculated to disarm your radicalism. If the diehards cannot beat you, they will adopt you. Above all, think twice about making your living as a writer. Wasting time and energy on hack journalism to pay the bills will be the least of your problems. Even best-sellers have to cope with a far more serious deficiency: little or no experience of what, for the majority of the human race, is the chief business of life—a nine-to-five job, with all the demands, restrictions, threats, dangers, challenges, competitiveness, and unpredictable social relationships that come with it.

The instinct, too often, is to get out of the rat race as soon as possible (most often after a brief stint as some kind of teacher) in pursuit of that singularly elusive will-o'-the-wisp known as creative freedom. But those who spend all day in hard-working solitude at home, and then want to tie one (or several) on in good company at the end of it, tend not to be on quite the same wavelength as those who get their bellyful of company during working hours and welcome a return home for domestic peace and relaxation. Inevitably, the creative loners end up writing on what they know about; and what they know about, all too often, is limited to urban sexual adventurism (all those bored Updike housewives with husbands at the office), holidays abroad, and the shenanigans of other writers. Drink has always been a regular ingredient in the mix: the roll call of famous literary lushes is long enough to validate alcoholism as an endemic hazard of the profession. Waugh and Graham Greene also threw in the extra hot spice of religion: no accident, I think, that some of the most powerful scenes in *The Power and the Glory* take place in the Mexican province of Tabasco.

It might have been thought that Waugh's career would have worked as an awful warning against over-close imitation; but the facts, unfortunately, tell a different story. One of Waugh's best incidental critics was to prove a striking example of this, and not through any lack of insight. He defined *Decline and Fall*, brilliantly, as pessimistic romance presented as farce. He pinpointed the way in which, later in Waugh's career, "what had been an enlivening bitterness sank to defiance and jeering." He pilloried *Brideshead Revisited* (in a piece mischievously titled "How I Lived in a Very Big House and Found God") for numerous and appalling symptoms of radical decline, including the corruption of judgment by snobbery. "Throughout life"—this when reviewing the biography of Waugh by Christopher Sykes—"[Waugh's] rudeness in public was famous … but without this compulsion to say the unsayable he would never have come to be the writer he was." (Takes one to know one.) He saw Waugh's horror at the destruction of innocence, and diagnosed his Catholicism as a self-insightful alternative to suicide (or liquor, though Waugh in fact kept himself going with liquor too). He praised Waugh's generosity and kindness to the unfortunate, his sense of honor. When he first burst upon the London literary scene, he was hailed—to the intense alarm of them both—as Waugh's successor. This, ironically, proved true in too many ways for comfort. The critic's name, of course, was Kingsley Amis.

II.

Kingsley William Amis was born on April 16, 1922, in Norbury, a newish outer suburb south of London. When a rail line was put through in 1878, as Amis reports in his memoirs, "the stretch between Streatham and Croydon was too long so they planted a station in between." Haphazard Metroland expansion did the rest. The name was picked from a neighboring country house. Until young Amis came along, Norbury's nearest approach to literature was as the setting for one of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Marinated in a genteel atmosphere of tennis clubs, bridge parties, and stucco-fronted semi-detached villas, it formed a natural breeding ground for upwardly aspirant lower-middle-class conservatism. Popular lending libraries abounded, encouraging a mild philistinism toward anything more literary than romances, whodunits, and the new *Pooh* books. Fake Tudor architecture, pseudo-Jacobean furniture, imitation Turkish rugs were all the rage. This was the world in which Amis grew up, a world where, as he later confessed, "I would as soon have expected to fall in with a Hottentot as with a writer," and the pretentions of which he started demolishing at an astoundingly early age.

When the poet Philip Larkin, Amis's closest friend, told an interviewer that he himself had begun writing "at puberty, like everyone else," Amis commented, in surprise, "He left it until puberty? I'd been writing for years by puberty." To his first biographer, Eric Jacobs, he admitted, revealingly, that "I wanted to be a writer before I knew what that was." Zachary Leader, who quotes these words early on in his own monumentally thorough biography, sidesteps their clear implication. Among the six dominant themes he lists as crucial for understanding Amis as man and novelist, he stresses, first and foremost, "the formative influence of Amis's early upbringing." There is a great deal of truth in that; but the fact remains that plenty of other only children grew up in lower-middle-class homes in Norbury between the wars without ending, for good or ill, as the wealthy and world-famous fictional voice of their generation. When every other factor has been counted in, what sets it all in motion is still the inexplicable creative spark that strikes seemingly at random, and in the ancient world was externalized as a visitation by the Muse.

Amis's parents were typical of their background and period: anyone familiar with Charles and Carrie Pooter in *The Diary of a Nobody* will at once recognize their antecedents. His father, an export clerk with Colman's Mustard Co., turned down an offer to be the firm's representative in South America because his wife refused to go abroad: he was never offered a promotion again. Apart from some mild eccentricities (unfunny imitations, pretending to be a foreigner in pubs) inherited and sharpened up by his son, William Amis fitted in well. He played cricket and tennis well into middle age. Uncertain of his own social status, he believed that the lower orders (blacks

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included) should "know their place." Both he and his wife, Peggy, thought of sex, even sex in marriage, as something dirty and not to be discussed in Kingsley's presence; what their son got instead were the usual inane lectures about masturbation thinning the blood and leading to insanity. Kingsley's difficult birth was made the excuse for no more children, and also for the cessation of marital relations altogether. When Peggy encouraged the seven-year-old boy to write, she did not know that she was encouraging a trend that would lead, ultimately, to vivid expositions of sexual dystopia. None of this (as I can testify from my own very similar Metroland childhood) was in the least exceptional.

The Good Fairy who endowed young Amis at birth with Juvenal's "incurable disease of writing" (*insanabile scribendi cacoethes*), and with the talent and the determination to make a success of it, got considerable help from two related factors, both educational. The first was the existence of the great endowed British grammar schools. The second was the postwar expansion of Oxbridge, and the university system as a whole, initially to accommodate a flood of ex-service students offered Further Education and Training (FET) grants, but in due course to extend tertiary education to sections of the population that had hitherto hardly been touched by it. At the City of London School, Amis was taught by top-class scholars who today would settle for nothing less than a professorship. From one teacher in particular, the Reverend C. J. Ellingham, he learned the value of memorizing literature, later astonishing his son Martin by quoting, at random and often at length, from poets as varied as Shakespeare, Marvell, Pope, Byron, Kipling, Auden, "and of course Larkin."

Zachary Leader tells us a good deal about Ellingham and his influence on Amis, mostly, I suspect, with the wholly laudable aim of countering the vague (and fallacious) popular belief that Amis's alleged philistinism meant that he was also poorly read. Whatever his acerbic views about large numbers of writers from Chaucer to Virginia Woolf, these largely deriving from his strong and often strident anti-modernism, Amis's detailed familiarity with the canon (not to mention offbeat areas such as science fiction) would put many a contemporary academic to shame. Ellingham also taught him that, as Leader says, "one can disagree with a poem's ideas or politics and still admire it" (another decidedly unfashionable view today). For both Ellingham and his student, A. E. Housman was a classic case in point.

But the deepest impact that Ellingham had on Amis was through his brilliant and trenchant textbook, *Essay Writing: Bad and Good*, published in 1935, of which Amis wrote, after rereading it later in life, that he was struck by "just how much has stayed in my memory, and how much it has influenced me." That influence penetrated every aspect of his writing, and much of the thought behind it. Once alerted, one cannot read a page of Amis without sensing Ellingham's guidelines and aphorisms in the background. On this, as on so many critical issues, Leader offers no direct judgment, preferring simply to lay out the evidence and let the reader draw his or her own conclusions.

In particular (though he would have hated to hear himself so described), Ellingham was a splendid sniffer-out of bullshit. "If you are describing a sunset," he wrote, "and feel that 'the sunset was beautiful' is not enough, it is bluff to write 'the sunset was amazingly beautiful.' You have not avoided the duty of describing the sunset. You have only made your task harder, for now you must show that it was amazing as well as beautiful." Any reader of Amis's posthumous *The King's English: A Guide to Modern Usage* will at once recognize the master's touch. "If you decide to use slang," Ellingham wrote, "never apologize for it with quotation marks. You cannot have it both ways." And again: "Be scrupulously honest.... You cannot vamp up enthusiasm for the 'sublime masterpieces of English literature' if you read or enjoy nothing but Edgar Wallace or Angela Brazil. If it is a crime to enjoy Edgar Wallace, which I deny, do not be a furtive criminal." When, in 1965, Amis compiled *The James Bond Dossier*, he must have felt he had his old tutor's full approval.

Thus, one by one, the elements that went to make up the phenomenon we know as Kingsley Amis, novelist, poet, and polemicist, were being set in place: the lower-middle-class mores that, with irrepressible humor, he satirized but could never entirely discard; the ambivalent obsession with sex; the only child's tendency to see the world—in effect, other people—as not only hostile but violent, alien, and inexplicable (a tendency exacerbated by three years in the army, for him a Kafka-like structure of looking-glass logic); energy and determination to a quite extraordinary degree; and above all, a classics-based education, at school and Oxford, that gave him a powerful style and honed his critical intelligence.

So far the Good Fairy. What the Bad Fairy threw in to balance things included the egotism of a spoiled only child always inveighing against the egotism of others, especially women; an overmastering weakness for liquor and adultery; and, most crippling of all, a quite staggering and deliberate narrowness of experience and interests. Abroad—literature, languages, cultures—left Amis cold except as a source of sunshine and cheap booze. Architecture, most of the visual arts, science, nature, Russian ballet, the business world, T. S. Eliot and the modernist movement—all were ignored or derided. Vulgar provincial philistinism, sneered the elite. A new chapter in Britain's perennial class war was about to begin.

III.

The idea for *Lucky Jim* was planted in Amis's mind as early as October 1948, while he was still at Oxford. Larkin, degree in hand, had moved to a sub-librarian's post at University College in Leicester, where Amis visited him. On Saturday morning they dropped in for coffee at the college common room. Amis looked around—a cold-eyed anthropologist among the natives—"and said to myself, 'Christ, somebody ought to do something with this.'" He pinpointed the scene as "strange and sort of *developed*, a whole mode of existence no one had got on to from outside." The new world of provincial university life had found its fictional chronicler, though it would take more than six years, and several false starts and rejections, before Jim Dixon finally made his famous debut, in the publisher Victor Gollancz's trademark pus-and-permanganate-colored dust jacket. The effort of this prolonged literary birth seems to have cleared a block in Amis's psyche: from then on he turned out books steadily and methodically, as though on a conveyor belt.

But back in 1948 Amis was in a far from comfortable position. He had scraped a First in his finals, but apart from this, his prospects looked less than encouraging. He had very little money. His girlfriend since 1946, Hilary ("Hilly") Bardwell, had gotten pregnant, and

TOMASZ WALENTA

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after first considering an abortion, they had a highly unromantic shotgun marriage, gloomed over by all four parents. Throughout his noisy undergraduate career Amis had made a point of targeting both the revered figures of English literature and the dons who taught them with childish, highly public, and often obscene anti-Establishment rant: *Beowulf* got zapped as an "anonymous, crass, purblind, infantile, *featureless* HEAP OF GANGRENED ELEPHANT'S SPUTUM"; the fellows of his college in procession had "*much less* dignity than a procession of syphilitic, cancerous, necrophilic shit-bespattered lavatory attendants." With lethal mimicry ("Shakespeare" emerged as something like "Theckthpyum") he mocked the verbal affectations of the Goldsmith's Professor of English, Lord David Cecil. Cecil was not amused, and subsequently ensured that Amis's B.Litt. thesis failed.

Normally, an Oxbridge First would be a sure passport to a good job; but Amis's applications were turned down with monotonous regularity (the word had obviously gone around about him) and he only got his University College of Swansea lectureship—offered as the result of a last-minute emergency—after all other more desirable posts had been filled. Pay was poor, he had a heavy teaching load, and soon after her first baby was born Hilly was pregnant again. The Amises were frequently broke. A heavily autobiographical first novel, *The Legacy*, never found a publisher. Then, over months of exchanges with Larkin, Amis began to work toward adapting to fiction the kind of down-to-earth realism that stamped their correspondence. A work initially titled *Dixon and Christine*, and embodying a maliciously accurate, barely disguised portrait of Larkin's girlfriend Monica Jones, began slowly to evolve.

One of the best things in Leader's vast biography is his subtle teasing out of this process: his assessment of what, and how much, the manuscript that became *Lucky Jim* owed to Larkin, his untangling of the two friends' intricate and improbable collaboration. His careful verdict (with which I basically agree) would seem to be that while Amis benefited enormously from Larkin's astringent suggestions, the overall debt was not as great as Larkin—discouraged by *Lucky Jim*'s huge success from writing further fiction himself—ultimately came to believe. Leader dismisses the rumors that Larkin had virtually written *Lucky Jim*, boosted by his catty comment to Monica ("I refuse to believe that [Kingsley] can write a book on his own—or at least a good book"), and his claim to another girlfriend, Maeve Brennan, that Amis had "stolen" *Lucky Jim* from him, showing such comments to have been, at best, envious exaggerations. It is good to see that old canard finally laid to rest.

I have, for eminently personal reasons, a vivid recollection of the literary furor that greeted *Lucky Jim*'s publication in 1954. I was due to undergo my Ph.D. orals, and at Paddington station I stopped by the bookstall for reading matter to cheer me up on the train. The word had got out that *Lucky Jim* was, among other things, a hilarious riff on the scholarly world: just what I needed. But by the time I reached my destination I felt like canceling the whole thing, creeping away into a quiet corner, and cutting my throat. The universities were peopled with trendy malevolent halfwits. Most research was mind-numbingly platitudinous dreck. The real world was somewhere quite different, and reserved for disorganized young drunks who burned holes in the bedclothes, passed out when giving a public lecture, insulted everyone in sight, and still ended up with the best girl and a cushy London job. I managed to pass my orals, but—not, I think, entirely by accident—spent the next decade or so as a literary journalist rather than the professional academic I had dreamed of becoming.

More than half a century later, my social hindsight reinforced by Amis's subsequent career and a mass of telling detail from Jacobs's and Leader's biographies, it is easy enough to put this landmark novel, and the effect it had on me, into perspective. The handsome young iconoclast photographed by *Vogue* was also, we now know, terrified of flying and of the dark, and liable all his life to panic attacks if left alone in a house or apartment overnight. What was taken at the time as a left-wing attack on the conservative British political and academic Establishment revealed itself in due course—when Amis changed tack and began targeting the radicals—as not even the classic swing from left to right brought about by success, but rather as an undifferentiated, mostly apolitical, and often aggressively sophomoric distaste for authority figures of any sort. Amis's second wife, the elegant and talented novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard, told Leader, shrewdly, that what really interested Amis wasn't so much politics as the company of male political journalists (preferably in saloon bars). The rodomontade against the academic world was fueled as much by insecurity as by ambition: when he finally, in 1961, exchanged Swansea for Cambridge, Amis found the new cultural ambience so off-putting that after a couple of years he resigned his fellowship.

Shortly before *Lucky Jim*'s publication Amis wrote to Larkin: "What I want, cully, is a chance to decide, *from personal experience*, that a life of cocktail parties, cars, week-ending at rich houses, wine, nightclubs and jazz won't bring happiness. I want to *prove* that money isn't everything, to *learn* that pleasure cloys." He soon got his chance, but the learning took a lifetime. Like some of the other so-called Angry Young Men—John Braine, John Osborne—with whom he came to be associated in the public mind, his attitude to money was that of every stereotypical nouveau riche: spend it by the handful

Eugene Wigner Joins the Manhattan Project

Hatred's homicidal.
Hitler knows. He makes
what most men mean by hate
a tepid sentiment,
though at the time,
no one seemed inclined
to notice, and I wondered,
When will my Hungarians
awaken? I waited
for the Jews to rouse
themselves. But only
slowly were they moved
to anger; even then
most merely said,
"depose the madman."
Moderation's suicide.
A whimper while the butcher
spreads fresh paper.
Even in translation
in the *Times*, he aims
his hate at me, my family
trapped in Budapest.
Our decades-old conversion
meaningless. In Nazi law,
I could become a *hausfrau*
more easily than Lutheran.
Why should I hesitate
to bend my skills to kill?
My colleagues here
at Princeton wince.
I challenge them
to say which wrong
they disapprove of more:
the braying Nazi donkeys,
or this Jew who has
the questionable taste
to corner them.

JOHN CANADAY

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on personal luxuries. As the cash and the contracts began to pour in, and a week after the birth of his daughter, he took Hilly out to dinner in Swansea and ordered a bottle of Veuve Clicquot. ("Can you afford it, boy?" the Welsh waiter inquired amiably.) A good car and a television set quickly followed. Amis was so impatient that he spent royalties before he got them, seldom made proper allowances for taxation, and began a lifelong tradition of dunning agents and publishers for ever-greater advances to deal with his spiraling debts.

Meanwhile, the London literati, gobsmacked first by *Lucky Jim* and then a couple of years later by John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*, were nervously trying to make cultural sense of it all. Trendy, but a tad short on intellectual background, they hailed *The Outsider* as England's cutting-edge answer to the French avant-garde, only to see it annihilated—to their acute embarrassment—by professional philosophers as an amateur scissors-and-paste ragbag culled from secondary sources. They labeled Jim Dixon, Jimmy Porter, and Joe Lampton (the antihero of *Room at the Top*) Angry Young Men, the spearhead of a social revolution, when in fact all three come across as ruthlessly on the make in the existing system, while Osborne's Porter drips nostalgia for the Edwardian perks of a lost colonial empire. They also became identified with their authors: Dixon's notorious crack about "filthy Mozart" became a standing reproach to Amis, who (as both biographers make clear) in fact cherished Mozart as his favorite composer.

But lower-middle-class British intellectuals were on the march all right—part of the huge postwar social upheaval that had begun in 1945 by delivering a landslide Labor victory at the polls—and thumbing their collective noses at the traditional shibboleths and polite niceties of (as they saw it) the toffee-nosed craps and wankers whose turf they were invading. What's less often noted is how much of their own mores they brought with them. The Archie Bunkerish racist pub-chat about Jews, "nignogs," and foreigners generally was something that Amis, Larkin, and the rest inherited from their parents and never got rid of, along with an ineradicable social unease, which neither cash nor honors could wholly kill, in the presence of nobs. Before going to Buckingham Palace to be dubbed a knight, Amis put himself on a beanless diet for a week, so scared was he of accidentally farting in the royal presence.

The unease also bred mean and retributive ingenuity. In old age Amis arranged for Hilly and her impecunious third husband, Lord Kilmarnock, to become, in effect, his paid housekeepers—a scheme enthusiastically promoted, for their own ends, by his children. He bought the house and met the bills; they looked after all his needs from the basement. As he said, with relish, it was like the plot of an Iris Murdoch novel. Julian Barnes, invited round to Amis's ground-floor flat for supper, was astonished to see the meal brought in on a tray by Kilmarnock. "Not bad for a boy from Norbury, eh?" said Amis the moment Kilmarnock was out of the room. "Get your dinner from a peer of the realm." The Norbury boy got to be a knight; the peer in turn became his unofficial butler (and was so referred to outside his hearing). In the end, royalties trumped everything except royalty itself: Amis was duly impressed by the queen. Jim Dixon would have farted.

IV.

In the long run, of course, what really matters is the quality of Amis's work; and here, more than a decade after his death, it is abundantly clear that his great and undeniable talent suffered from three handicaps. First, he had the bad luck to form his ideas in the mid–twentieth century and never change them, so that the huge wave of social revolution that followed, embodying everything from feminism to postcolonialism and gay lib, left him stranded on the beach, a mere angry historical relic. In 1988, in *Difficulties With Girls*, he had a character mutter: "The bloody world's moved on without consulting us." He was right. Far from defining his age, he ended up as a characteristic product of it. Secondly, and a corollary of this, though he often attacked other novelists for borrowing characters and situations from real life rather than inventing them, critical research, in particular that by Richard Bradford in *Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis*, has demonstrated what not a few of us had guessed from the novels themselves—that his own fiction was heavily autobiographical. Finally, his obsessional drinking not only caused a sizable midlife crisis by leaving "his erotic program torn in two" (Louis MacNeice's crisp summation), but, worse, encouraged quarrelsomeness and pompous punditry.

One odd result of all this is that it has become impossible to read Amis's novels, especially the later ones, without a recurrent sense of uncomfortable embarrassment, the prickly awareness of social (and in particular gender-based) assumptions belonging not only to another era but another world. Chauvinism hardly begins to describe it. This may well be one reason why his fiction (*Lucky Jim* always excepted) has largely vanished from American bookstores. For the new presentist generation, it is hopelessly out-of-date.

The more we learn about his life, too, the closer fact and fiction become intertwined. There are clearly defined periods. From *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955) to *One Fat Englishman* (1963)—that is, from Swansea through Cambridge, with a Bacchanalian entr'acte in Princeton—each novel offers an anchoring bass line of marriage overwritten with the arpeggios of irresistible adultery, plus twinges of puritan guilt, pizzicato, which Amis assuaged by displacing all his own nastiest characteristics into his antiheroes, especially the appalling Roger Micheldene. As Dickens's Mrs. Micawber said, "Experientia does it": when it came to the battle of the sexes, Amis knew whereof he wrote. But in 1963 Hilly wrote on her philandering husband's bare back, in lipstick, as he slept on a Yugoslav beach, "One fat Englishman I fuck anything," and left him, taking the children with her.

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This flummoxed Amis, who had carefully set up a creatively productive scenario (marriage plus ongoing infidelities) and saw no reason why it should change. Neither of them had perhaps bargained on the unprecedented impact of Elizabeth Jane Howard. Sex alone, as Amis's Don Juanism had shown, lacked staying power; but Jane's erotic charms had two formidable winners to back them up. She not only hit Amis's romantic streak (hinted at in early poems such as "A Bookshop Idyll" and "A Song of Experience"), she was a much-praised fellow novelist. The combination was irresistible, and Amis, uniquely, fell head over heels in love with her. He had already resigned his Cambridge lectureship. Idyllic freedom beckoned. The marriage of true minds was to brook no impediments.

For a few years—during which, significantly, Amis's friendship with Larkin went into remission—it worked. Both *The Anti-Death League* (1966) and *I Want It Now* (1968) contain powerful fictional versions of his involvement with Jane. The poem "Waking Beauty" sees Jane as the Sleeping Beauty to Kingsley's post-Freudian Prince. They read and commented on each other's work-in-progress. During this period Amis made a serious attempt at monogamy, which of course necessitated a fundamental rethinking of his well-tried plot line. It all sounds too good to last, and of course it didn't. There were various reasons for this. The initial magic of passionate sex wore off. Amis, the spoiled only child, had been used to Hilly running the household full-time, and expected Jane to do the same on top of writing her own books. It took Jane eight years to teach her husband even how to use a washing machine, and he never learned to drive, so she was also the family chauffeur. He had solipsism and writing, she did the cooking and chores. Her fiction suffered. So did the marriage of true minds.

But the real secret enemy (well analyzed by Leader) was Amis's interminable and ever-increasing intake of alcohol. This had worried Jane from the start of their marriage. By 1969, he was putting away at least a bottle of whiskey a day in addition to drinks with meals (he kept a keg of single malt in his study), and had begun to suffer mild hallucinations. All this duly went into the character of Maurice Allingham in *The Green Man*, and was too reminiscent of Waugh's crack-up in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* for comfort. Increasingly from now on—something Amis never fully faced in his fiction—his heavy drinking played havoc with his sexual urge, till by about 1975, though not much over fifty, he seems to have become more or less permanently impotent.

Predictably, his marriage suffered; Jane persisted heroically for another decade, but left him in 1980, after he flatly refused to go on the wagon. ("Look, I'm Kingsley Amis, you see, and I can drink whenever I want," he told her.) Just as predictably, he laid the blame for this contretemps not on his own lifestyle, but on women in general and Jane in particular. With screwing no longer a viable option, the latent streak of misogyny in his nature rose seething to the surface, and his later fiction presents a disconcerting parade of harridans, psychotic freaks, and manipulative bitches. The zanier aspects of fashionable psychotherapy, in both *Jake's Thing* and *Stanley and the Women*, evoked some of his most lethal satirical portraits. He became a red-faced, overweight, choleric clubman (the photos used by Leader are devastating, especially when set against those of his svelte and handsome youth). In his latter years he was spending more than one thousand pounds a month on drink alone. The undergraduate whose "Evelyn Waugh face" had been one of the funniest in his repertoire had ended up as a bad copy of the real thing, an uncomfortable reminder of Orwell's comment that by fifty every man has the face he deserves.

What remains truly extraordinary, given all this, is the way he went on writing, and the standard he kept up till the very end. Patches of flat prose, repetitive situations—these are the worst charges that can be brought against his late novels. As Jane conceded, he was the most disciplined writer she had ever met. It's as though life, for him, was the world he created when he sat down at his typewriter: nothing else really mattered. And that world was not only narrow and largely plotless, in the narrative sense, but also formulaic. The circumscribed domestic ambience of homes, pubs, and clubs; sex (and, latterly, its absence); marital and familial spats couched in minimalist staccato dialogue; the witty sniping at pretentiousness; the inspired metaphors and similes—it was as brilliant, and in its way as artificial, as the world of P. G. Wodehouse, for whose work (as one eternal schoolboy to another?) Amis always expressed the greatest admiration, and whom in ways he oddly resembled.

Where Wodehouse evoked a fantastic parody of pre-1914, Amis's stock-in-trade remained, throughout his career, a pseudo-realistic version of the 1950s, with its heroes only occasionally taken to task after the 1960s for their outdated habits (such as the three-martini lunch or its equivalent, the habitual use of four-letter words in public discourse, the troglodytic assumptions about women). In both cases, the society created was total and self-sufficient. Amis on occasion reads as one imagines Wodehouse might have written after a crash course on sex, something singularly absent from his own fiction. And Amis's images, scattered with prodigal abandon through his novels, are pure Wodehouse to the end: the "very serious-looking municipal block" in *The Folks That Live on the Hill* (1990) "made of a material resembling petrified porridge," or the "girl of about thirty" in his last novel, *The Biographer's Moustache* (1995)—written while Eric Jacobs was researching his biography, and containing one of his most lethal self-portraits—who "answered his ring apparently clad in an excerpt from the Bayeux Tapestry." Even the famous drunk lecture in *Lucky Jim* owes something to Gussie Fink-Nottle's prize-giving speech at Market Snodsbury grammar school in *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

"Importance isn't important," Amis once said, "only good writing is." If he saw the improbable irony of his thus aligning himself with Oscar Wilde, he kept it to himself. Zachary Leader has done a truly wonderful job of assembling the multifarious and contradictory elements that went to make up this mischievous, self-destructive chameleon of a novelist: the aggressive energy, the obsession with craftsmanship, the refusal to distinguish between "high" and "low" culture except in degree of quality, the sense of the world outside as not only hostile but alien, the sardonic eye for self-important cliché, the sparklingly witty aphorisms. The cumulative effect is to make us actually fond of Amis, despite the considerable reasons why we shouldn't be. Jacobs may give us more of his subject's embarrassing outbursts, and Bradford remains unsurpassed at working out the subtle exploitation of real life in the novels; but Leader's vast, insightful, and very well-written *biographia literaria* will long remain the benchmark by which all future studies of Amis will be judged.

Oddly, though, neither Leader nor any other critic pays serious attention to what was perhaps Amis's most memorable feat: his ability, again and again, to hit the reader's funny bone with precise, hilarious, and often outrageous observations. His spot-on talent for mimicry extended beyond funny faces to accents, speech patterns, and conversational gam-

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bits. He parroted feminine arguments to perfection. Even the wilder shores of love he could effortlessly reduce to a bad joke. Listen to Joyce Allingham's reaction to her narrator-husband's suggestion that they brighten up their sex life with a threesome:

> "You'd, well, do her, for instance, and then she and I would work each other over for a bit, until you were ready again, and then you'd do me from behind, I don't mean, you know, just *from* behind while she sort of did the front of me, and then she and I would go on together again and perhaps you could do the same thing again only the other way round, or else you and I could divide her up and take different bits of her, and then you and she could take different bits of me, and so on. Is that the kind of thing?"
>
> "Roughly, yes."

Listening to Joyce's outline is not altogether unlike having the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* summarized by a plasterer's mate. In *Stanley and the Women*, one character (clearly speaking for his creator) remarks that "the rewards for being sane may not be very many but knowing what's funny is one of them." As a wry summation of Amis's own attitude as a writer, that would be hard to beat. ◆

Ruth Franklin

KADDISH'S NOSE

THE MINISTRY OF SPECIAL CASES
By Nathan Englander
(Alfred A. Knopf, 339 pp., $25)

In one of the best-known stories in *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, the collection of short stories that shot Nathan Englander into the literary stratosphere seven years ago, a middle-aged WASP sitting in a taxicab has the sudden and inexplicable revelation that he is Jewish. The next day he visits a rabbi in Brooklyn, who informs him that he is a gilgul, or reincarnated soul, and sends him off with a copy of *The Chosen*. But it isn't easy being transcendent: the "gilgul of Park Avenue" must face various hurdles on his path to the truth, including a maid who prepares creamed chicken dinners (forbidden!) and a petulant wife who wonders why "people who find religion always have to be so goddamn extreme." The story ends with him looking out his apartment window: "He had not read that far into the Bible and still thought God might orchestrate his rescue."

In a genre that lately has seesawed between the cool restraint of Alice Munro or William Trevor and the anything-goes exuberance of the *McSweeney's* hipsters, Englander seemed to have landed from an alternate universe. Mostly set in the fictitious neighborhood of Royal Hills, Brooklyn, his stories offered a knowledgeable, ironic, and sympathetic vision of Orthodox Jewry, populated by men and women seeking deliverance from spiritual or emotional anguish and generously laden with authenticating details. In "The Wig," a middle-aged wigmaker catering to the religious community coaxes a young delivery man into selling her his flowing curls for an unconventional headcovering of her own. The title story tells of a Hasid who, deprived of sex by his wife, receives a special dispensation from his rabbi to seek the services of a prostitute.

Critics ate up Englander's persona as an "insider outsider" unafraid to cast a cold yet compassionate eye on the insular world of his childhood. Readers were charmed by Englander's yeshiva-boy-turned-rebel personal history, which made his fictions into documents of (somewhat ambivalent) alienation. But Englander's fans seemed not to notice, or perhaps not to care, that he too was a kind of gilgul, although the reincarnation in question is literary rather than spiritual. Questions of influence, of discipleship, even of mimicry, loomed large and unanswered in his work. A gilgul, of course, is the very antithesis of an original.

Some of the tales in Englander's first book seemed to have been not so much influenced by past writers—Sholom Aleichem, I. L. Peretz, and especially Isaac Bashevis Singer—as actually to channel them. Consider "The Twenty-seventh Man," inspired by Stalin's execution of a group of Yiddish writers in 1952, which delineates the proceedings with a series of perfectly calibrated vignettes. A drunken poet must be carried out of a whorehouse by its employees, "a sight [he] would have enjoyed tremendously had he been conscious"; a sententious elderly lion is still waxing philosophical on his way to jail. Once the writers are all assembled in prison, the talk—literary gossip, mostly—grows so heated that they must be separated into smaller groups. The drunk and the lion find themselves locked up with writer number twenty-seven, who has never published a word but has not skipped a day of writing since childhood. Denied pen and paper in the cell, he composes a story in his head, which he recites to the others just before they are all led to their deaths. With minor adjustments, this story would be impossible to pick out of a collection of early Singer.

Of course, this is a considerable compliment. Formally, "The Twenty-seventh Man" is a marvel; each sentence is perfect. And Englander maintained this control through the majority of his collection. His writing was seductive, his insight into human nature mature, his humor perfectly pitched. But if the writer's first obligation is to "make it new," this he failed to do. The Singer-ness of Englander's colorful stories was even more pronounced, and more banal, in the ones that purported to discover—as if for the first time, with almost a whiff of scandal—that believing Jews, too, seek pleasure and love; that the observance of the law does not quite banish unbearable urges. Who knew?

Englander's new novel rounds up a different selection of ghosts, but the effect is similar. *The Ministry of Special Cases* is set in Argentina in 1976, at the start of the "dirty war," although—as with the stories—the location is peculiarly non-specific. In *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, we recognize Royal Hills not by its scenery or its smells, but by its inhabitants: the wigmaker, the rabbi in his study. Yet those people, by virtue of belonging to a deliberately anachronistic community, seem themselves to exist out of time—nobody carries a cell phone or watches HBO. Likewise, the characters in Englander's novel occasionally eat a steak or drop a Spanish word, but there is nothing necessarily Argentine about this book. Although its plot hinges on the fate of a boy who is "disappeared" by the government—he is escorted out of his parents' apartment one night and literally ceases to exist—it could be set in any totalitarian regime, at any point in history. The place and time, though specified, is curiously generalized, even generic.

The disappeared boy's father is the picturesquely named Kaddish Poznan, who proudly identifies himself as an *hijo de puta*, a son of a whore: his mother was

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a prostitute who catered to the Jewish underworld of Buenos Aires, headquartered in the Society of the Benevolent Self—known as the "pimps' shul"—and populated by characters with names such as Talmud Harry (the synagogue's main *macher*), Hezzi Two-Blades, and Bryna the Vagina. The story behind Kaddish's name is explained thus: a sickly baby, he was named by a rabbi who had been summoned by his mother, the aforementioned *puta*, for a blessing and then refused to cross the threshold. "His judgment was instant. 'Let his name be Kaddish to ward off the angel of death. A trick and a blessing. Let this child be the mourner instead of the mourned.'"

Some blessing. A generation later, the descendants of these "Benevolent Self toughs" have established their own shul and built a wall to separate the new graveyard from the tombs of their disreputable ancestors. (As the old joke goes, every Jew has a synagogue he doesn't go to.) Kaddish, who has spent his life pursuing one money-making scheme after another, has finally hit upon a useful service: he sneaks into the old cemetery at night and chisels the names off the tombs, erasing the evidence of ties between the now-prosperous Jews of Buenos Aires—the son of Pinkus "Toothless" Mazursky has become a plastic surgeon—and the corruption of the Benevolent Self. ("What I offer," he tells the surgeon, "is a face-lift for the family name.") The symbolism of Kaddish's acts does not go unrecognized. "Which man is better off," Bryna's daughter asks Kaddish, "the one without a future or the one without a past?"

This strange question hovers hauntingly over the crisis at the novel's center. Pato, Kaddish's teenage son, is rebelling in all the usual ways: smoking pot, staying out late, reading left-wing tracts. After the coup establishing military rule takes place, early on in the novel, Kaddish burns some of Pato's books as a precaution. Pato is furious and storms out of the house, intending never to come home. But he is arrested at a concert, together with a group of young people: the rest are released, but Pato, who was not carrying ID, is held at the police station. After Kaddish picks him up, the two pick up their fight where they left off. "Fuck you," Pato says. "I wish you were dead." And Kaddish responds: "Fuck you. I wish you'd never been born." At just that moment, "while the curse still hung in the air between them, there was, most clearly, a knock at the door. And Kaddish went to get it. And Kaddish got his wish. It was, in an instant, as if his son was never born."

Before either of them fully realizes what has happened, Pato is being led away:

> A man in a sharp gray suit walked out the door into the darkness of the hallway, a book tucked under his arm. A second man followed, two books, like dead weights, one hanging from each hand. A third and a fourth man walked out the door with Pato, Kaddish's son, standing between them. They held him very firmly by the elbows, grasping tightly, so that his arms were bent and his hands straight in front. As he passed out of the apartment he smiled at his father, who hadn't moved from his place by the heavy door, holding it open (needlessly) with a foot. He said to Kaddish, "A very poor note to end on," and for this comment grips tightened and hands pointed higher in the air. They were not walking fast; Kaddish heard it all clearly. He also heard the elevator gate open and the hum of the old motor in the dark, since no one pressed the button for the hallway light. The gate to the elevator slid back, teeth caught gears, and then, along with the motor, there was the click of the release as the car lowered and the five bodies started to descend.

The tragedy (or, more precisely, the crime) of the *desaparecidos*, as Englander has imagined it, is not primarily the political tragedy of a government's irremediable atrocities against its citizens (many of them children), nor the emotional tragedy of parents who have lost their only child and would do anything to get him back. It is more like a metaphysical puzzle. What are the consequences when a person is deemed no longer to exist? In parts two and three of the novel, Kaddish and his wife Lillian, searching more and more desperately for Pato (a search that is doomed from the start, though Lillian is the only one who does not know it), pursue this question in all its ramifications.

Not surprisingly, these sections are thoroughly indebted to Kafka, another of Englander's heroes. At the police station Kaddish, having been informed that Pato is not there, tells the officer to prove it. "We really don't do that, sir," comes the response. "Proving is frowned upon." The Ministry of Special Cases—"a bureaucratic dumping ground, a loony bin for those with no redress"—is a pit of governmental corruption and inefficiency, where officials demand documents that don't exist, insist on habeas corpus when there is no body, and send Lillian on fruitless chases down never-ending corridors. A crush of people throng the door every morning, only to wait again in another line to take numbers from a machine; on her first day, not understanding how the system works, Lillian draws number 456, only to learn that the line starts again with number one the next morning. A powerful general to whom she finally takes her case tells her maddeningly, "I can't undo what's not been done."

No figure epitomizes grief more than a mother who has lost her son; and there are moments—Lillian refusing to eat dinner until Kaddish has set a place for Pato; her continual vigil by the window of their apartment, willing him to turn the corner—that make this grief painfully real. But the novel's tone shifts so abruptly between the tragic and the absurd that it is hard to know what is intended to be serious and what is not. In one particularly bizarre subplot early on, Kaddish and Lillian accept nose jobs as payment from Dr. Mazursky, who is running low on cash. "Happiness is contained in the nose," Mazursky tells Kaddish.

> This is why Jews, as a people, are dysthymics. In those ample noses happiness moves around like a firefly in a jar. It must be contained more exactly. One must keep it in place. Like a butterfly pinned to velvet, happiness runs through. We can cure you, Poznan. We can liberate the man trapped inside the Jew.

Indeed, when Kaddish's bandages are removed, his new nose is gorgeous. But a student has botched Lillian's nose, and in the initial shock of Pato's disappearance, she cries so hard that it falls off. Is this supposed to be humorous? Shocking? Surreal? It is impossible to tell. (Before this scene, I thought all the business with the noses was Englander's attempt to sample Gogol, not Monty Python.) But the effect of any absurdity like this is to distance the reader from the characters: if things happen to them that are bizarrely unreal, then empathy is disrupted, and it never really recovers from the disruption.

In the wake of such an episode, how can one take the tragedy of the Poznans—or, by extension, this novel—entirely seri-

TOMASZ WALENTA

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ously? Yet apparently Englander intends it seriously, because the alteration in their noses becomes one of the novel's leitmotifs. (Pato, who declined Mazursky's offer, has the biggest nose in the family.) "This kid didn't come from either of you," says an officer who looks at Pato's photograph. Later, Lillian weeps to look at her reflection, saying, "I want my big nose back, Kaddish. I want to see Pato when I look in the mirror. Go find me my old nose."

For a metaphysical fantasy to succeed philosophically, it must be plausible on a realistic level. One could honestly read, say, *The Plague*, a book for which Englander has repeatedly professed his admiration, as a novel about a plague. But nothing about *The Ministry of Special Cases* (an oddly bad title for the novel, as the ministry neither functions as metaphor nor figures in more than a few scenes) is quite real enough to support the book's heavily allegorical aspects. Aside from a couple of throwaway references to streets or neighborhoods, Englander offers little texture of Buenos Aires, nothing to help us see the city in which these people supposedly live and suffer. The particulars of plot, too—all the attributes and the histories that novelists are expected to lavish happily upon their characters—are strangely lacking. (Why do we never find out what any of Kaddish's hare-brained schemes were?) And the rhinological angle aside, we are never told what anyone looks like. This absence of tangible detail gives the novel a feeling of slightness, of ephemerality, which is of course at odds with the gravity of its themes.

For the Relief of Unbearable Urges was similarly lacking in narrative flourishes, but the effect was to spotlight the characters, nearly all of whom were completely, if economically, drawn. Yet psychological realism is also strangely absent from this novel. Lillian is the book's most affecting figure, but we rarely see her doing anything other than searching for Pato; she exists only as the Bereaved Mother. We learn nothing—nothing—about Pato's personality, other than that, like any teenager, he wishes he were having sex and he likes to hang out with his friends. Even Kaddish, who is intended to be a thoroughly singular character—by virtue of his name, his outsize nose, his existence at the margins of respectability—comes off as little more than a representative of Jewishness. Even in a novel about Jews, Jewishness is not enough.

The trouble seems to be one of tone. The book is narrated from Kaddish's perspective and in his voice, which is ironic, aphoristic, and flecked with the lilt of Yiddishisms: "Kaddish's clients were the ones who had what to lose, the respectable, successful segment of their community that didn't have in its families such a reputable past." But gradually it becomes clear that this voice is not unique to Kaddish; most of the other characters speak in similar aphorisms. It's not that he sounds like everyone else, but that everyone else sounds like him. Take the plastic surgeon's pronouncement that "happiness is contained in the nose." Or the general, who tells the Poznans that the only way they will bring Pato back is to "go to the river and mix him from clay. People from nothing is a Jewish affair." Even the priest to whom Lillian appeals as a last resort talks like a rebbe: "You [Jews] get yourselves mixed up in politics and the newspapers. It's either the heart of the city or the heart of the matter. What doesn't make sense to a bystander is this Jewish hunger, this compass like a pigeon's for putting yourselves in the center of things."

This lack of modulation is all the more disappointing in comparison with the many moments of splendid writing. The unforgettable passage depicting Pato's arrest, for instance, with its chilling final sentence: "The gate to the elevator slid back, teeth caught gears, and then, along with the motor, there was the click of the release as the car lowered and the five bodies started to descend." Or this thoroughly original description of Kaddish's nose job:

> Kaddish blinked quickly. At least he thought he had, the view was so wet and fuzzy, he wasn't sure if his lids had moved. Again there was the question of tears. Kaddish still wasn't sure if he was feeling anything, though he thought maybe his head had split in two. He felt a line up the middle of his forehead, a soft separation or something like. It made the oddest noise, so very distinct—an internal sound. He wondered if this was what deaf people heard, if, with the world around them turned off, they got such wonderful sound from within. It was like an egg cracking. And that's what Kaddish saw. It was as if his eyes were in backward, peering into the blackness of his empty head, and in its very center floated a large white egg, so white as to be throbbing in its whiteness, so that against the blackness its edges seemed to glow.

But there are also instances of writing that is simply weak, when scenes that ought to have profound emotional power are ruined by abrupt changes of mood or by amateurish explanations. At one point Lillian is told that her petition has at last been granted, but when she receives the papers supposedly providing for Pato's release, a different child's name is written on them. Assuming this is some kind of trick, she shows up at the police station anyway, only to be granted custody of a teenage girl:

> Lillian grabbed the girl's elbow and gave her a shake. "Tell them," she said. "Tell them you weren't taken from my house, from my block. Tell them it's a lie, that we've never met."
>
> "It was your house," the girl said. Lillian drew back, startled by the claim and by how sharply the girl smelled of pee. "From the top floor," the girl said. "Your house. And a bakery. There was a bakery and a beating in a car."
>
> Lillian first believed the girl meant it and, thinking her somehow bewitched, she pushed her away.
>
> This was surely a nightmare that Lillian was having. To prove it, Lillian crossed her arms and pinched at her biceps as hard as she could. When Lillian did this she also tried to turn the girl into Pato. If it was a dream, let her see her son.
>
> The girl wouldn't change, and Lillian knew this wasn't anything but another disappointment. All she'd be getting was this child, with her sallow face and her cracked lips and a hollowness to her eyes that only got worse when Lillian saw them straight on. This child was empty inside. Lillian let her hands drop. What the girl had said wasn't a lie. Certain things at certain times are always truth.

The inherent drama of the scene is squandered through the intrusive narration ("This was surely a nightmare … Lillian knew …") and the jarringly oracular turn at the end. Lillian is no philosopher, and no mother being handed the wrong child could believe that "certain things at certain times are always truth."

The awkward dance between tragedy and farce continues through the book's final pages, as the truth of what happened to Pato subtly unfolds and Kaddish endures the unintended consequences of yet another desperate scheme. In the end we are left, again, with the image of a figure at the window: this time it is Lillian, who does not actually believe that God might orchestrate her rescue, but hopes for it all the same. Is the gilgul of Grub Street waiting for his own divine intervention? ◆

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Cambridge Diarist

Taking the Bait

A few years ago, I barely knew the name Norman Finkelstein. I was vaguely aware of his screed, *The Holocaust Industry*, which argued that Jews "fabricated" their victimhood. I had heard of his comparisons of Israel to Nazi Germany. ("[I] can't imagine why Israel's apologists … would be offended by a comparison with the Gestapo," he once wrote.) And I had caught wind that neo-Nazi Holocaust-deniers like Ernst Zundel, now in an Austrian prison, praised him for "making three-fourths of our argument—and making it effectively." But I certainly never imagined meeting such a person.

Like David Duke, who is now teaching in the Ukraine, Finkelstein is a failed academic. By his own account, he has been fired by "every school in New York," including Brooklyn College and NYU. One of his former department chairs attributed Finkelstein's firing to "incompetence," "mental instability," and "abuse" of students with different politics from his own. That may help explain why he accepted a job at DePaul, a school Finkelstein describes as "a third-rate Catholic University." With a political science department known as hard left, Finkelstein finally saw a path toward tenure—a sorry possibility now being debated, and one that I may have inadvertently helped along.

While I was touring in 2003 for my book *The Case for Israel*, I was invited by Amy Goodman of Democracy Now to debate Noam Chomsky. I agreed, but, when I showed up, it was Finkelstein in the studio. "Chomsky couldn't make it, so we have a substitute," Goodman said. Unbelievably, Finkelstein's performance sunk well below Chomskian standards of honesty. He accused me of not having written or "read" my own book, which he implied was written by Israeli agents. For good measure, he also accused me of plagiarizing it from a 1984 book written by Joan Peters. (His absurd accusation was that I found quotes from Mark Twain and others in Peters's book and attributed them to the original authors rather than to Peters.) Finkelstein knew that, as an academic, I would have to rebut these charges. I asked Harvard to investigate them, which it did and dismissed. Yet Finkelstein continued to repeat his lies—and I kept responding.

Now Finkelstein could say that we were in a feud—a charge that, in retrospect, clearly served his purposes. He published an article in the online newsletter *Counterpunch* titled "Should Alan Dershowitz Target Himself for Assassination?" An accompanying cartoon portrayed me as masturbating while viewing images of dead Lebanese civilians on a TV set labeled "Israel peep show." The cartoonist, solicited by Finkelstein, had won second place in an Iranian Holocaust-denial cartoon contest. To reinforce his point, Finkelstein called me a "moral pervert" who "missed the climatic scene of his little peep show."

Should I have taken his bait? Well, I responded and handed him a crucial argument: Finkelstein could then use our feud to argue that "outside interference" had denied him tenure. His problems, of course, have nothing do with ignorant arguments (he accused Leon Uris of naming his *Exodus* protagonist Ari, "[a] diminutive of Aryan," reflecting Israel's "admiration" for Nazism) or overt anti-Semitism (he compared Jewish leaders to "stereotypes straight out of *Der Sturmer*"—the Nazi propaganda organ). In light of Finkelstein's history of attacking Holocaust survivors—Elie Wiesel, he claims, lied about his background—it is not surprising that, when the Iranians convened a Holocaust-denial conference last year, they invited two Americans: David Duke and Norman Finkelstein. (Finkelstein backed out because of a disagreement over his allotted speaking time.)

In our recent contretemps, I can say for a fact that I wasn't provoked into attacking—I was invited. Specifically, the former chair of the DePaul political science department asked me to "point [him] to the clearest and most egregious instances of dishonesty on Finkelstein's part." I responded with evidence of Finkelstein's history of making up quotes, citations, and facts. Despite this evidence, DePaul's politicized political science department voted nine to three to recommend tenure. The dean, however, rejected its recommendation.

And now, just as I could have predicted, Finkelstein screams "outside interference." Naturally, when pressing this case, he presents thousands of signatures from outsiders demanding that the dean reverse his recommendation. He has now organized a "Finkelstein solidarity committee" and threatened a lawsuit. (I can't wait to be called as a witness.) I've been a leading villain of this effort. Chomsky has accused me of launching a "jihad." (I am not alone, it should be noted, in opposing Finkelstein's tenure: The president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights argues, "Finkelstein lacked the requisites associated with academic excellence.") Chomsky, referring to my involvement, complains that he had "never seen anything like it." Well, I have. Back in the late '70s, Chomsky, who was teaching at MIT, led his own jihad against Henry Kissinger when Columbia University considered offering him a position. Kissinger, of course, was a distinguished academic with a long record of publications, while Finkelstein writes unscholarly ad hominem screeds. But, for Chomsky, that distinction doesn't matter. In his eyes, hard-left politics are enough to qualify an academic as a "good scholar," a term he has used to describe Ward Churchill ("little Eichmanns"), Robert Faurisson (a French Holocaust-denier), and Norman Finkelstein. Great company!

In the past months, I have received threatening calls and letters. The Rutgers biologist Robert Trivers, for one, has warned, "Nazi-like apologists as [you] need to be confronted directly." Suddenly I'm the Nazi? And a masturbating one to boot! I'm not shy about entering arguments, but I can't help feeling like I walked into a trap. How could I not argue against Finkelstein? But, when I raise my voice, I know that I'm supplying essential ammunition. I guess when you've got no scholarship to make your tenure case, you need all the outside interference you can get. ◆

Alan Dershowitz

Alan Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter professor of law at Harvard and author of Preemption: A Knife That Cuts Both Ways.

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In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Dealing with a Nuclear Iran

Some timely changes will help us cope with the unknown.

Rather than threaten to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program at the reprocessing stage, we should shift the terms of the debate — to the testing of a nuclear weapon. By arguing that Iranian enrichment is the equivalent of Iran's going nuclear, we give Iran status as a nuclear power without its having to produce weapons. Although the critical scientific threshold in mastering nuclear technology is indeed the fuel cycle, significant scientific and engineering challenges — as well as time — are still ahead. By emphasizing enrichment so strongly, we give Iran a false sense of achievement that very much serves its purposes, but not ours. Our policy should be to deny Iran the prestige of becoming a nuclear power unless it also incurs the costs of overt violation of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. Peaceful nuclear power may include mastery of the fuel cycle — but it does not produce nuclear weapons tests. We would not have to make a complicated technical case about the nuclear threshold; if they test, the Iranians would be making our case.

—Kori Schake

Why We Disagree about Foreign Policy

Different perspectives yield different conclusions.

Politics works against the recognition of the role of perspective. Each side insists that the facts speak for themselves when those facts favor its interpretation. Lee Hamilton, a respected former Democratic congressman and cochair of the 9/11 Commission, is an example. Appearing at a September 11, 2006, press conference with his Republican cochair of the 9/11 Commission, Thomas Kean, Hamilton said: "Facts are not Republican, and they're not Democratic. They're not ideological. Facts are facts." But, revealingly, he made at comment to rebuke his Republican cochair; they were having a dispute about the facts in an ABC docudrama "The Path to 9/11." Facts may not be Republican or Democratic, but they have to be interpreted by Republicans and Democrats. Hamilton said what we all say when we want to claim the facts for our point of view. We say the facts are a slam dunk. But they never are.

—Henry R. Nau

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